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THE MYTH AND REALITY OF OUR URBAN PROBLEMS

Raymond Vernon

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THE MYTH AND REALITY OF OUR URBAN PROBLEMS

by Raymond Vernon

The Stafford Little Lectures of 1961
with Seminar Discussion

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The Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University is pleased to make available these lectures by Professor Raymond Vernon of Harvard, his latest contribution to the field of urban and regional studies, along with discussion of them at a seminar of members of the Joint Center. Professor Vernon is a member of the Faculty Committee of the Joint Center.

For the wealth of data and analysis assembled in the nine volumes of the New York Metropolitan Region Study, which Professor Vernon directed, all students of urban and regional affairs are much in debt. These volumes were not, however, concerned with prescription--with what public policy in urban areas ought to be. It is to this problem that Professor Vernon here turns his attention, in a significant extension of his earlier work. He delivered these observations initially in the Stafford Little Lectures of 1961 at Princeton University. The Joint Center publishes them in the hope that they will not be his last on the subject of the city.

This is one in a series of multilithed publications being issued by the Joint Center. In this series, one of books, and one of reprints, the Joint Center presents its published findings in the field of urban affairs. These findings reflect the Joint Center's interest both in research and in application of the results of research to the solution of urban and regional problems.

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Introduction

The invitation from President Goheen to present the Stafford Little Lectures for the spring of 1961 caught up with me in a little apartment in Mexico City. The location of this retreat--1,500 miles from any large urban area in the United States--was symbolic. For four or five years prior to that time, as director of the New York Metropolitan Region Study, I had been wrapped up in the problem of America's urban areas. Throughout these years, I had puzzled over figures and maps, pounded sidewalks and alleys, and hovered in helicopters over cities and suburbs, trying to understand the whences and whithers of our expanding metropolises. During that period, my colleagues and I had shepherded into print some three-quarters of a million words on the subject.

At the time President Goheen's invitation arrived, therefore, I was thoroughly weary of the problems of urban areas. Now I was off on a different intellectual adventure in Mexico, one utterly unrelated to the urban problems of the United States. Nothing, I would have supposed, could persuade me to turn my mind back to this closed era of my career.

Yet my response to President Goheen's invitation was warm and spontaneous. I recognize now that the response was due to a deep-seated feeling that there was still a piece of unfinished business to be undertaken. In all the outpouring of words represented by the nine volumes of the New York Metropolitan Region Study, my colleagues and I had consciously and rigorously stuck to diagnosis and prognosis, eschewing any observations which might be regarded as policy or prescription. This rigorous avoidance of policy had been in accord with the purpose of the New York study--to lay a foundation of understanding about the process and direction of urban change, leaving the prescriptions to others. In retrospect, that decision appears to have been a wise one. The objectivity of our analysis has not been widely raised in question, as it might have been if the

study were coupled with various asserted objectives and various proposals for action.

No one can be exposed to so challenging a phenomenon as the growth of our urban areas, however, without developing some normative views about what he sees. Accordingly, various inchoate notions on policy must have been forming in my mind through all these years of scholarly analysis. Or so it seems to me now. For as I set about writing the essays which appear between these covers, there was a repeated sense of the rediscovery of old notions, not the framing of new ones.

The Stafford Little Lectures have afforded me an opportunity to venture into what, for me, is an untrod field. Here the object is prescription, not prognosis. Here, priorities and objectives are asserted. And like anyone's list of priorities and objectives, personal values and personal perspectives are deeply involved.

What emerges from this exercise will, I think, prove a little disconcerting to most readers. At any rate, it has proved a little disconcerting to me. For if I am right, the scholars who scribble about urban problems and the worthy citizens who do something about them have come to define those problems in a way which has very little to do with the values and needs of most of the people of modern America.

If this diagnosis is right, the community leaders of America's urban areas are faced with a moral dilemma which arises repeatedly in any democracy. What are they to do? Are they to frame programs which respond to the values of the majority, whether or not they share those values? Or are they to adhere stubbornly to priorities and prescriptions which reflect their own unshared standards, on the assumption that these standards are in some sense superior to those of the majority and ought to be given an opportunity to triumph in the end?

Raymond Vernon

Belmont, Massachusetts
May, 1961

For contemporary America, the barefoot boy with cheek of tan is a nostalgic memory, the victim of hot asphalt roads and speeding auto traffic. Today, two out of three children in America are growing up in an urban setting. Raised in seedy brownstones, garden apartments, or trim suburban yards, they are strangers to the unpolluted swimming hole and the dusty country lane.

Though most Americans live in urban areas and though hundreds of thousands more seem voluntarily to gravitate to those areas each year from farms and small towns, the intellectual and material leadership of America is plainly disturbed by what it sees developing in these areas. Practically any five-point list of the Great Problems of our Contemporary Civilization is likely to include, in one cryptic variation or another, a reference to the problems of urban living. To Louis Bromfield, no less than to Thomas Jefferson, the old congested cities are festering sores, centers of vice, disease and corruption. To David Riesman and A. C. Spectorsky, the suburbs of the modern city are a sociological straitjacket, demanding a deadening conformity in thought and appearance. To Lewis Mumford, the whole pattern of our urban living is an excrescence so far removed from his ideal as to demand a total revolution in the design of living.

For all the chorus of protest, however, most Americans seem strangely unaroused. Each year, they buy a few hundred thousand more picture windows, seed a few hundred thousand more lawns. The decay of the central city barely concerns them; the cries of strangling congestion stir them only briefly; even the issue of mounting taxes, an exposed nerve in the structure of local politics, does not seem to have the capacity to bring them shouting into the streets.

The striking disparity between the literature of protest and the lethargy of the citizen is a riddle which demands an answer. I propose to suggest an answer in this series of lectures. What I shall contend in substance is that the clear majority of Americans who live in urban areas look

on their lifetime experience as one of progress and improvement, not as one of retrogression; that they see their lot as being better than that of their parents and confidently expect their children to do a little better still.

This is not to suggest that the problems of urban living are an illusion, a product of the over-wrought imaginations of the Mumfords and the Riesmans. But I shall try to show that our pattern of urban development presents much more acute problems for some sectors of society than for others; that it presents more serious difficulties of housing, transportation, and communication for the well-to-do and for the intellectual elite than for the great body of the middle class; and that it offends the values of these elite groups far more than the middle class.

The result is that the problems of urban living and their proposed solutions are usually framed in a way to which the values of the great majority of Americans do not respond. In the diagnosis of these problems, some developments are stressed quite out of proportion to their seeming impact on urban society; others are overlooked. And in the proposed remedies the same kind of distortion exists. For all the eloquence of the protest, therefore, there is no action. For neither the protest nor the proposed action seems to the majority of Americans to have much bearing on their daily lives.

The Urban Problem Reviewed

Anyone who has had the opportunity to review the history of American cities cannot fail to be struck with the fact that the things we speak of as urban problems have been with us in some form for a very long time. If transportation is a part of the problem, as it surely is in anyone's analysis, we find evidence that the problem was acute for a considerable group of urban dwellers as far back as the early 19th century. Before the Civil War, New York's downtown streets were already a jumble of brewery drays, horse trolleys, hackney coaches, and steam locomotives; so desperate was New York's citizenry over the situation that it even built overhead

crosswalks to bridge the equestrian battlefield of lower Broadway. By 1900, according to contemporary photographs, the scramble of traffic was endemic in extensive downtown areas of our eastern cities. By 1925, the automobile was already creating intolerable waiting conditions at the major river crossings in and near the big cities of the East, as ferry boats struggled valiantly with the rising tide of traffic. By 1930, the mass transit facilities of practically all the major cities were filled to bursting in rush hours, reaching peaks of discomfort for the middle- and low-income commuter which have probably never since been matched.

If housing is an aspect of the urban problem, then the urban problem again must be thought of as very old. In the mid-19th century, every major city of the United States embraced teeming slums whose conditions of life were so incredibly shocking--shocking even by the middle-class standards of the time--as to make the contemporary slum areas of East St. Louis and South Philadelphia appear benign by contrast. When Mrs. O'Leary's cow wiped out half of Chicago in 1871, she forced the rebuilding of a city which had largely been a collection of poor shacks and hovels. When San Francisco's great fire of 1906 destroyed much of her Chinatown, it wiped out a teeming slum of indescribable squalor. The evidence provided by the prints of the 19th century tells us also that, in addition to containing large slums at their ancient cores, the large cities of the United States typically were surrounded by extensive shanty-towns consisting of shelters that were only a cut or two above the frontier lean-to.

If crime and delinquency are measures of the urban problem, the impressionistic evidence suggests that in long-run secular terms the problem may actually have declined substantially. Most major cities of the 19th and early 20th century contained areas in which law and order simply were not applied and in which anarchy or gang rule was allowed to go unchallenged. Instead of having neighborhoods in which patrolmen plied their beats in pairs, many cities had neighborhoods which never saw the authority of law in any form. Chinese tongs were

the law for many of San Francisco's impoverished inhabitants, while warring gangs were the recognized authority for many of New York's immigrant Irish and Italians.

If the quality of public service constitutes a measure of our urban difficulties, then there is no doubt that the secular trend has been one of improvement rather than decline. The history of American cities throughout the 19th century is punctuated with accounts of epidemics generated by polluted water supplies, of streets rendered impassable by mud and water, of great fires allowed to rage unchecked because of the pitiful inadequacy of firefighting equipment, and of corrupted and compliant courts and police. In fact, what Lincoln Steffens had to say of St. Louis in 1904 could have been said of most major cities at the time:

> The visitor is told of the wealth of the residents, of the financial strength of the banks, and of the growing importance of the industries, yet he sees poorly-paved, refuse-burdened streets and dusty or mud-covered alleys; he passes a ramshackle fire-trap crowded with the sick and learns that it is the City Hospital; . . . he calls at the New City Hall and finds half the entrance boarded with pine planks to cover up the unfinished interior. Finally, he turns a tap in the hotel, to see liquid mud flow into wash-basin or bath-tub.[1]

Reliable water and sewage services, dependable fire-fighting facilities, street-cleaning and snow-removal brigades, efforts to deal with air and water pollution, are much more a product of the 20th than of the 19th century in most American cities.

Yet no one will deny that discontent with our urban setting is being articulated more forcefully than at any time in our recent history. In this sense, we have an "urban problem." To understand what that problem is and what our alternatives for action may be, it is indispensable to review the general process which has been generating change in the urban environment.

The Emergence of Urban Neighborhoods

No two cities of America, of course, have developed on quite the same pattern. From Boston to Los Angeles, each bears the stamp of differences in age, topography, and local style. Yet the similarities in the development process have been striking and persistent, suggesting

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[1] The Shame of the Cities (McClure, Phillips & Co., New York, 1904), p. 31.

common causes and similar problems.

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that in the pre-railroad age, when the cities of America were in their early stages of growth, one of the worst scarcities facing the city builders was a scarcity of land. In that era, cities depended for their location upon some unusually felicitous feature of the landscape which helped to ease the transportation problem. The preferred location for seaboard towns was the mouth of a river emptying into a well-protected harbor, sited well above the high-water mark; New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Boston all could claim this feature. In much the same way, inland towns tended to grow best at the confluence of lakes or rivers; witness such centers as St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. As usual, there were exceptions to the pattern--cases in which state capitals were established in the raw wilderness by drawing lines on a map, cases in which trading posts on open prairies achieved city status by a process of unnucleated spread over open land. But by and large, the old cities were crowded up close to the waterfronts. These were the focal points where factories and the warehouses could ship and receive their goods. Once these focal points of the cities were placed, the homes of the factory hands, the clerks, and the merchants were clustered closely around them. And with the location of homes and jobs determined, there were limits to the areas in which one could situate civic centers, local government offices, and retail stores. Since shanks' mare was the standard means of transportation in the pre-trolley age, the urban microcosm of the era economized carefully on space; the yards were small, the streets were narrow, and the houses stood cheek by jowl. The fact that there were endless amounts of open space in all directions around the city was quite irrelevant to its land use, given the purpose of the city and its means of communication.

Little and crowded though they were, most cities quickly established neighborhood dis-

tinctions. Some streets were for the rich, some for the poor. Some areas were for warehouses, others for retail shops. Sometimes the distinctions were accidental ones, generated by the random location of the first house or factory of a given type. More often there was method in the seeming randomness.

If hilly prominences were to be had close by the city center, the rich often acquired them, for such prominences provided just the right combination of propinquity to the city and remoteness from its more unpleasant manifestations. A five- or six-mile ride by carriage from the city's center could take one from his house in town to his retreat along the river bluffs or up the lake front. A ten-minute ride through the city streets, provided it was in the evening hours, could carry one from his town house to the theater or the opera. To be sure, epidemics were a menace and fires were a hazard, but these were in the nature of acts of God, beyond the resources of any community to control.

Those of less substantial income had to make greater compromises on location. They could not hope to bid for precious space close by the city center and the docks. The needs of commerce and industry and the ability of the rich to bid for close-in space effectively barred the less well-to-do from that market. Besides, the river front and docks were areas of confusion by day and insecurity by night. So the middle-income group compromised between propinquity and security; they built their homes of frame and brick at the edges of the city mass, taking on the problems of the long walk--later the long trolley ride--to their places of work in the city.

The poor, meanwhile, lived where they could. Some found marshland or mudflats close by the city center and erected their squatter shacks to stand until the next flood season. Here and there an abandoned warehouse or brewery in the oldest sections of the town was converted into a rabbit warren of tiny living spaces and was stuffed with human beings.

By the middle of the 19th century, the main elements in the pattern of the largest American cities were already securely in place. The now-threadworn cliche that the city center was the haven of the very rich and the very poor already had acquired some currency. The harried commuter travelling down to city centers by horse-trolley was already providing copy for the cartoonist. The jumble of traffic in the city center was already arousing the city burghers.

So America's cities, like Topsy, just growed, accompanied by fires, epidemics, corruption, and crime. The disposition of America to let nature take its course in the cities was buttressed by the circumstance that, being largely a rural nation, it had other more pressing problems and other outlets for its energies. Reflecting the rural pattern of their constituencies, the state and federal lawmakers were much more concerned with the problems of railroads, canals, ports, and landholdings than with city slums, epidemics, and congestion. In time, the nation slipped into the railroad age, aware of its cities but largely unconcerned with the pattern of their growth.

As cities approached the era of the steam locomotive a certain hardening of the arteries was inevitable. Dirt highways became paved streets. Curbs and gutters appeared to lock the street pattern in more firmly. Sewers were laid in the right-of-way to carry off the waste that threatened the water supply. Later on, water mains were laid to bring pure water in from outlying points. Soon, the costs sunk in the city's hardening street system were so great that no old street could be closed off, no new street opened up, except at great expense to taxpaying citizens.

The hardening of the city's arteries was accelerated by other forces. As pioneer huts changed to frame and brick cottages, as the cottages changed to three-story row houses and lofts, the demarcation line between the public street and the private property which flanked it took on a new rigidity. The public takers of land could only push outward from the narrow

confines of the street at their peril--not only at their monetary peril, but at their political peril as well. As flexibility declined, only a great power such as a Napoleon, a holocaustic fire, or an earthquake had sufficient strength to punch holes in the rigid structure. One element in the ultimate obsolescence of the cities was now firmly in place.

Other forces were also at work to assure the obsolescence of the mid-19th century city. As the railroad became the ubiquitous form of travel in the latter half of the 19th century, it wrought profound effects on the shape of our American cities. The railroad released industry and commerce from their need to perch on the water's edge and permitted warehouses and factories to find sites wherever rail spurs could be built.

At the very first, it is true, the rail's appearance seemed to make very little difference to the shape of the cities. Railroads were built first of all where the traffic was to be had; and since the traffic was at the water's edge, the railroad's main lines, branch spurs, and marshalling yards were pushed up as close to their target as they could manage to get. Great rail yards appeared close by city centers on the Charles, the Hudson, the Schuylkill, the Ohio, the Missouri, the Mississippi, and scores of other rivers. With that giant step achieved, another major source of the later obsolescence and blight of the nation's principal city centers was firmly established.

The new form of transportation had other consequences, however. Unlike river and lake transport, the railroad was perfectly capable of pushing its spurs almost anywhere that freight business was to be had. By the last quarter of the 19th century, some industries began to see great advantages in exercising their freedom to locate away from the center of the city mass. The steel mills needed space to store ore and coal and to shower the sparks of their giant furnaces over the surrounding territory; the slaughtering houses needed yards for incoming cattle; the rendering plants needed surcease from the endless complaints of close-by neighbors; and so

on. The foul and noisome industries, therefore, were the first to make the trek from the city centers to outlying locations--"outlying", that is, in terms of the city layouts of 1860 or 1870, but not far out at all in terms of the city boundaries of 1920. At their new locations, these industries sank extensive facilities, appropriate to the growing markets of the country. Once more, therefore, the cities of America were seeded with landmarks which later were to sprout as centers of rot and decay.

Despite the spread of some industries from the old centers of the city during the latter half of the 19th century, employment at the center grew by leaps and bounds. One reason for the growth was the change in the nature of America's jobs. It was in about this era that office work began to be a recognizable economic activity, separate from that of the making and distribution of goods. To be sure, there had always been some office work in cities. Governments at every level had maintained their bureaucracies in capital cities. Lawyers and scribes had clung close to the government offices. Merchants in their counting houses had located at the center, pinned there at first by the need to be near their waterborne cargoes on arrival and departure. But in the boisterous era of the robber barons and the great trusts, the office jobs of America's cities grew much faster than the labor force as a whole. Central offices of manufacturing empires, great banking institutions, large life and casualty insurance houses appeared in the major city centers of the nation.

The reasons why these great institutions huddled stubbornly in tight little clusters covering a few-score acres--in a few blocks about Wall Street, State Street, Broad Street, or Montgomery Street--has been developed in detail in various studies. Here, let me recapitulate in only the barest outline what lay behind the development of these curious clusters.

Face-to-face communication among the elite was the critical need. The business of the lawyer demanded that he talk with clients and with other lawyers; the banking business demand-

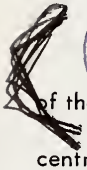
ed that lender and borrower face each other across the bargaining board; the business of the tycoon drew him to the banker and the lawyer. An endless flow of subtle, changing, delicate communication bound the group together in a tight little mass.

Once the compelling need to communicate had fixed the location of the office elite at some common central point in the city, the location also of a very much larger number of office workers--stenographers, clerks, messengers, and other routine workers--was largely determined. This was the case because the elite decision-makers of the office community, during the formative years in the creation of large offices, were as a rule the supervisors of the routine office workers. The company officer who negotiated with the banks for a line of credit on Monday and discussed tax problems with his lawyers on Tuesday, was also the officer who supervised the balancing of accounts on Wednesday and the billing of customers on Thursday. All these functions, therefore, were conducted at the location which he and his fellow officers regarded as most desirable for their frenetic existence.

The communicators of the spoken word were not the only group which clung to the central business district. There were others as well, involved in face-to-face "communication" of another sort. These were the wholesale and retail enterprises engaged in the business of buying and selling, especially in lines in which the sale required personal inspection. A carload of fertilizer suitably specified might be sold by letter or wire. But finished textiles, women's dresses, or living room furniture--these and scores of other products--had to be seen, fingered, compared, before they could be bought. Originally, little selling groups for the handling of merchandise of this sort had developed in the old waterfront sections of the major cities, in order to be at hand to receive the wares as they came off the ocean-going vessels and river boats. Later, as rails were put in place, these locations in the oldest sections of the cities began to make very little sense. But the individual seller of such products was loathe

to move from the established little groups; his penalty for moving might very well be the loss of business, as buyers refused to take the time and trouble to visit him in his offside location. The selling groups therefore tended to cling to the old business districts long after the structures had decayed and grown remote from the truck terminals where their products were delivered and from the rail passenger terminals which were the buyers' gateways to town.

There were also certain types of manufacturers who preferred the old center of the city. These were the men engaged in lines of production in which speed, uncertainty, and the need for face-to-face communications were the locational essence of the business. They were not the enterprises, of course, which were engaged in activities such as meat-slaughtering or copper-smelting; we have already pointed out that the tendency of these groups was to flee the center as fast as the railroad would permit. Instead, they were typified by the job printers, constantly receiving copy and delivering products against deadlines, endlessly checking proof and altering layout in conference with clients, often subcontracting their lithographing, engraving, or binding work for jobs with special wrinkles, ceaselessly dealing with an unstable mix of customers and suppliers. The garment makers were another breed which fitted the pattern--a group which was forever acquiring its materials and accessories from a parade of changing sources, always eyeing their competitors' styles, constantly racing against the clock. Enterprises of this sort could not stray very far from the cluster of which they were a part without incurring major losses in efficiency and sales.



So employment in the central business districts of the old cities grew, fed by the vitality of the economic activities for which a central city location was important. The growth of the central business districts preempted more and more centrally located land. Step by step, the growing population became more remote from the center where so many were employed.

At this stage, approaching the end of the 19th century, one began to see spectacular in-

novations in methods of hauling people each day from their homes beyond the center to the central business district. Horse trolleys in the city gave way to the swifter electric trolleys. The elevated electric train--later the subway--made its daring debut. Suburban railways began to appear. New bridge and tunnel facilities supplemented and eventually displaced the ferries. It would be barren to ask whether these innovations made possible the central business districts as we know them, or whether the presence of the central business districts demanded and secured the mass transit arteries essential for their existence. One development bolstered the other in a self-reinforcing cycle of the sort so familiar in the development process. And both were bolstered by the skyscraper--that ingenious device based on structural steel and the electric elevator which permits 5,000 or 10,000 people to be crammed inside a single acre of land.

Fed by the strength of their central business districts, the cities spread. The ramshackle squatter colonies of the poor ringing the edges of the cities were pushed back by the elegant row houses of the more solid burghers. Advance phalanxes of the rich, exercising the newfound freedom brought by the suburban lines, moved beyond the row houses to more spacious country settlements grouped about the suburban stations. All in all, the new patterns of urban land use showed a less concentrated clustering, a more generous use of acreage in the fringes of the old city.

None of these patterns of development caused particularly difficult fiscal problems for the older cities. As the 19th century came to a close, the cities were drawing considerable revenues from the real estate in their thriving central business districts. Besides, much of the city area within five or six miles of the central business district was occupied by solid taxpaying families. True, there was the strain of opening up new streets and neighborhoods, building new schools, laying new water mains and sewers. But the city was large enough so

that it was possible to spread the fiscal burden of these installations over all its varied neighborhoods, including the central business district and the still-thriving settlements created a generation or two earlier.

The heterogeneity of neighborhoods within the city at the turn of the century was maintained by still one other circumstance. In those days, the political boundaries of many of America's larger cities were not yet rigidly fixed. The laws of many states laid down procedures by which new neighborhoods outside the city limits could be annexed to the city on petition of the residents. For these were the days when persons were settling at the fringes of the city on virgin territory or unincorporated county land sparsely occupied by self-sufficient farms. The new settlers who wanted schools, fire, and police protection, water and sewers, had no alternative but to petition them from the city. Later on, of course, as the growing cities would begin to push at the margins of the spreading suburban towns, all this would change. Then the annexation process would be forced to an end; the city limits would be rigidly fixed; and the possibility of constantly adding new neighborhoods to the old city mix would be gone forever. But that was to come a few decades later, in the first quarter of the 20th century.

From this point forward--roughly from the beginning of the 20th century--the record grows more complex. To keep the pattern fully in mind, it will be useful to trace separately the course of movement of a number of different groups in the nation's urban areas.

The Middle-Income Group

We begin with the middle-income group. More accurately, perhaps, we begin by dropping the very poor and the very rich from our analysis, to return to them later. The very rich, by our rough and ready standards, are the people whose income is sufficiently large that money is no object--very little object, at any rate--in the choice of living space. This is a group which today is prepared to pay $75 per room per month or more for the privilege of

living wherever it chooses to live; it is a tiny fraction of our urban populations, but as we shall see presently, a very important one. Then there are the very poor; for our present crude purposes we can think of the poor as those unable to muster a rental of more than $15 per month per room. This group, not insignificant in size, is largely unable to buy new living space, whether in the starkest type of apartment structure or in the flimsiest kind of one-family dwelling. Its housing market is, therefore, the hand-me-downs of other groups.

What is left is no homogeneous little body, but a group of considerable income range. If we think in today's dollars, it is a group capable of paying anywhere from $20 to $70 per month per room for living space. It ranges from the semi-skilled blue collar worker up through the middle ranges in executive row. What the members of the group have in common is a fair measure of sensitivity to the price of living space and the ability to buy newly built space of some sort out of their private income.

As the 20th century opened, the number of people in America's urban areas who could afford to buy living space was growing at a tremendous pace. New streets and speculative subdivisions were opening up at the edges of every big city as fast as the curbing could be put into place. Electric trolley lines were appearing all over the country, complete with parks at the end of the run to generate the week-end traffic. America's cities were spreading out.

The new subdivisions, it is true, continued to shun the extravagant use of land. The automobile, after all, was still a novelty and most breadwinners had to assume that their daily trek to office, store, or factory would begin with a walk to the nearest public conveyance. So the style of the era continued to be the three- or four-story tenement, the triple decker, the row house, or the private dwelling on a handkerchief-sized lot.

As we follow this middle-income group through the decades of the 20th century, we see

an almost continuous process of movement. By the 1920's, some of the more adventurous settlers at the edges of the urban mass were beginning to take the automobile into account as a fixed feature of their existence. By that time, some were willing to choose their living space on the assumption that they would ride, not walk, to a trolley or train; or, more daring still, that the trip to the office, plant, or store would be made regularly by car. As a result, building sites became much more plentiful--more plentiful in the sense that larger areas became accessible to the urban mass. Subdivisions began to break away from the public transportation lines and locate in open country. With the car becoming an indispensable part of the family's possessions, more households elected to live in private homes, even in areas where the prevailing style up to that time had been the multifamily dwelling.

The 1930's, though a period of depression, postponed marriages, and undersized families, still saw a continuation of the trend. The craving of most people for a place of their own in the suburbs was reflected in Federal programs, such as the FHA guaranteed-mortgage program, to meet the financing problems of home-buying. Hand in hand went the proliferation of consumer credit devices to ease the purchase of the ubiquitous family car and all the other hard goods of the home owner.

The period after World War II witnessed an even swifter acceleration of the trend. Now, single-family dwelling units were overwhelmingly important in the new construction undertaken each year within the big urban areas of the country. There were, of course, exceptions to the pattern--exceptions which make much more impact on the eye than on the cold and impersonal statistical totals. Each year, some tens of thousands of dwelling units in new low-cost public housing structures were built for operation under government subsidy. Each year, too, there were some hundreds of thousands more of private apartment units, though some involved land-acquisition subsidies or credit subsidies from one arm or another of government. But the over-

whelming bulk of new housing in the post-war period was the ranch-house-in-the-suburb, in one variant or another, complete with one- or two-car garage

America's middle-income group seems hungry for land--for quarter acres, half acres, or more, well removed from the crowded urban centers where their parents may have lived. And the nation has managed to provide them with the land they seem to want, by a process which can continue to go on for quite some time to come. The spreading national system of highways and superhighways has had two effects on the supply of land. First, of course, it has placed more land in reach of the urban mass--that is, within a radius of the thirty or forty minutes which most people seem prepared to spend in going from home to work. Thirty minutes, after all, was two miles to a swift and steady walker, and eight or ten miles on a speedy electric trolley; and it now represents 15 to 25 miles of distance on the road system of the 1960's.

At the same time, the highways have had a profound effect on the land-using propensities of the farmers who surround the big cities. As the roads drew the cities closer to the land, the farmers discovered that hired help was getting costly; either help could not be had at all in the periods of planting and harvest or else it was demanding a wage equivalent to that offered in the city nearby. So the farmers at the edges of most urban areas began to make adjustments to their new problems. Some gave up serious farming and lived on the sale of land parcels to the city folk. Others altered the lines of agriculture in which they were engaged; they abandoned their land-extensive pursuits such as raising grain and grass and began to feed their cooped-up cows ond chickens with commercial feeds. Considerable acreage reverted to scrub pine and weedy pasture, awaiting the day when the suburban developer would appear.

As a result, though developers grouse about the mounting cost of land, no dearth of

land has developed around the margins of the big urban masses. No dearth has developed, that is, if we take into account the fact that every urban area now can reach much further outward along its various spokes than was possible a decade or two ago. True, neighborhoods that were once potato fields are now covered with the spread of urban growth. But the land taken up each year with the new split-level, the Cape Cod, the Colonial, and the ranch house amounts to less acreage in most parts of the country than the added land made congruent to the urban mass by the improvement of the highway system.

And there is no reason to suppose that this process is at an end. Here and there, the edge of some urban area may merge with the spreading reaches of another, or may back up into some natural barrier such as a mountain range or seaside. But for a quarter century or more, the land around Boston, New York, Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and most of the other great urban clusters of the country will easily absorb their growing populations.

The process of spread which we have been at such pains to describe in the last few paragraphs has not merely affected the growing edges of the urban mass. It has also had its effects --profound effects--on the older neighborhoods left behind inside the mass. In simple terms, the children with middle-class incomes have chosen not to live where their parents lived; they have chosen not to refurbish their parents' homes, even if their parents enjoyed an income level not unlike their own in its relative position on the national income ladder. As a result, one can detect a cycle which appears again and again in many older middle-class neighborhoods. The new compact neighborhood of 1920, filled with its close-drawn homes of young families, has now become 30 or 40 years old. The children have grown up and departed, but the older folks have stayed on. The sidewalks have heaved and cracked over the roots of overgrown trees; the shrubbery has got out of hand; the lawns have been choked off by the heavy shade; the retail trade of the neighborhood, living off the declining purchases of the aging house-

holds, has begun to shrivel.

Why? Why have the children not stayed on, trimming the shrubbery, wielding the brush and paintpot, maintaining the walks, and providing themselves with decent shelter at half the price? The answers are not obscure. For one thing, the middle-income family today enjoys a real income which is close to double the absolute level of 30 or 40 years ago. It can afford two cars where its parents had one; a dozen electric appliances in lieu of a day worker; a television set instead of a neighborhood movie. Could the old house have been made to do for these needs? Sometimes, yes; more often, no. No, partly because the old houses were set up on plots so small that space for the second car--or the first one for that matter, as long as it sported the tailfins of the 1950's--could not have been provided on the site.

But another factor has discouraged the refurbishing of the older houses--the fact that the cost of skilled labor comes so high in the United States, as an unavoidable by-product of our high productivity and high living standards. This last point is worth a moment's more consideration. The cost of wiring a new home for the heavy electrical loads of modern living sometimes amounts to a good deal less than the cost of rewiring an old one to carry modern loads. The cost of installing the sleek, aseptic trim of the 1960's in a newly constructed house is less than the price of ripping out and replacing the dust-catcher moldings and Dutch shelves of the 1920's. To steam the ancient paper off crumbling plaster a third-of-a-century old, to patch, size, and repaint the walls, costs more than the pristine decoration of the new-built home. In short, in a nation whose economy places a heavy price on hand labor and a low price on materials, the cost of repairs and remodelling can easily outrun the cost of new construction. Like economic men, therefore, the children of the middle class have moved to the modernity of the split-level-in-the-suburbs, leaving many of the older middle-income neighborhoods to stagnate or decline.

This process of spread, to be sure, might not have gone on forever if the jobs of our metropolitan areas had not evidenced a similar tendency to spread outward. The reasons for this spread of jobs are not hard to find. Of every twenty jobs in urban areas, about four are in the consumer trade lines and another five or six in local governments, local utilities, local business or professional services, and local construction; these jobs, making up about half the urban labor force, more or less automatically follow the drift of the population as it spreads outward from the old city.

The other half of the job market is subject to a more complicated calculus of location. In a word, however, most of the labor force employed in manufacturing--the lighter manufacturing plants as well as the abattoirs and chemical plants--have joined the outward move. The kind of site required for the modern space-hungry plant simply cannot be found in the older portions of an urban area. The time-cost and money-cost involved in assembling an industrial site in some ossified district already encumbered by structures are extremely high--so high as to make that kind of operation simply out of the question, at least without summary public powers and extensive public subsidy. And even when public powers and the public subsidy are at hand, they are not swift enough or flexible enough or generous enough to match the offerings of private land on the outskirts.

Besides, with the advent of the truck, the erstwhile attraction of the railroads and rivers for industrial plants has grown weaker. With the ubiquitous use of the automobile, the labor force of the city no longer offers a unique attraction to the factory employer. Power, water, and sewage can now be had over much wider areas, a by-product of the spread of the homes. So industry has followed the trek to the suburbs, gobbling up land at the rate of about ten employees to the acre.

In fact only one major cluster of employment has resisted the outward move. This is

the complex of frenetic economic activities we described earlier--activities whose elite are overwhelmed with uncertainties, demanding face-to-face communication, and dependent for their effective operation upon swift access to various other enterprises. Most of these activities are in offices, some are in showrooms, and some are in manufacturing lofts. All told, they account for perhaps one-fifth of the urban areas' labor force and represent the critical nub of employment in the central business districts of most major cities.

Even in these activities, however, one can see a certain loosening of ties to the old city center. After all, the needs for swift and easy access and face-to-face communication do not apply to more than a tiny fraction of the office workers in the downtown area. In fact, the locational needs of the average stenographer or billing clerk can scarcely be said to differ very much from the locational needs of the mechanic or warehouseman. The unique requirements of many offices are confined to the office elite--to the vice president and treasurer, to the sales manager, the house counsel, and so on.

As offices have grown, therefore, and as the line of authority between the billing clerks and the treasurer has become more and more attenuated, one company after another has reconsidered whether the billing department and functions like it ought to remain in the central business district. Here and there, the decision has been made to peel off some of these functions and to locate them in the suburbs.

The trend to suburban locations for the billing clerks, if not the bosses, has been accelerated by two factors. One has been the appearance of the first generation of young women who drive cars more naturally than they walk; to recruit a workforce of young women office workers it is no longer necessary to sit astride a public transportation facility. The second factor has been the growing remoteness of the daughters of the middle class from the old city centers. In weighing the attractiveness of alternative job opportunities, a signifi-

cant fraction of these young women have preferred a job in the suburbs near home to one in the more remote, albeit more ebullient, city centers.

As far as the middle class is concerned, therefore, there has been little to impede the outward movement of homes and jobs. Both have drifted outward, sometimes for independent reasons, sometimes as a mutually reinforcing phenomenon. Except for the minority--the declining minority--who work in the central business district, travel from home to office is probably no more difficult for the middle class than it was twenty years ago. There is nothing to suggest that the outward drift of the middle class will not continue. There is no rubber band being stretched to the breaking point, no growing pressure which cannot be contained.

The Poor

For the poor of the urban areas, the story of the last fifty or sixty years has been rather different. Each urban area has had its own particular brand of poor, each stamped with some ill-fitting mass label. In the South and West, the cities have housed large numbers of Mexicans and Oakies; in the Southeast and Midwest, hillbillies and southern Negroes; on the Eastern Seaboard, Italians and Jews from Eastern Europe, then Puerto Ricans and more southern Negroes.

Each immigrant group has developed on a slightly different pattern from any other. Nonetheless, most immigrants have made a swift adjustment to their new urban life. When I say "swift", however, I am speaking in terms of decades, not of years. In the first decade or so, it has been enough for most newcomers to cling to the slim security of friends and relatives, and to take the hand-me-downs in jobs and living space that came along. Typically, therefore, these groups have settled on the edges of the neighborhoods where they first found shelter and have taken jobs that their friends have found for them.

By the first part of the 20th century, we noted earlier, the newcomers had little choice

but to settle in the oldest parts of the older cities. Barred from shacktowns in the suburbs, they crowded such structures as had been already surrendered by the middle class in the older neighborhoods. Incredible living densities were recorded in some cities; in New York, where such densities were at their highest, some 300,000 people could be found living in one square mile of lower Manhattan.

But neighborhoods such as these did not retain their peak densities for many years. After a time, they began to show population declines. For if the parents could abide such brutal crowding, the children could not. So the children of the poor, like the children of the middle class, moved on, leaving their parents to luxuriate in the moldering space of the ancient neighborhoods. Some of the offspring acquired income sufficient to buy new housing, and became a part of the extensive middle-income group. Others used their growing knowledge of the city to ferret out less ancient structures, structures which in turn were at the stage of being surrendered by the middle class.

In many large cities, therefore, the location of the most notorious slum neighborhood of today is different from that of a generation ago. More likely than not, the current slum is in a "newer" portion of the city. The chances are very high, too, that it is rather less crowded. In addition, it is typically less compact and covers a good deal more acreage than the slums of a generation or two ago.

It is in this last characteristic--the extensive acreage covered by the modern slum--that we find one key to the heightened public interest in the slum phenomenon. As long as the slum was contained in a small congested mass within the old center of the city, most of the middle-and upper-income inhabitants of the urban area could live out their lives without being acutely aware of its existence. As the slum-dweller has taken to less dense living, however, the manifestations of his existence have not been quite so easy to suppress. In more re-

cent decades, slum neighborhoods have come to ring the business districts of the city and have even begun to reach out into the less congested fringes of some urban areas. As they have reached out into the newer areas, their march has driven the middle-income groups before them, giving still more space to the poor. In some degree, therefore, the poor have created their own housing supply, simply by ostentatiously bidding for it.

The latest phase of this outward spread of low-income families is one which is especially calculated to draw attention to their existence. In this phase, low-income families have begun to discover that structures ripe for downgrading are to be found not only in the ancient central city of the urban mass but in nearby suburban towns as well. Sometimes these are suburban towns with an old industrial core of their own; but sometimes they are residential satellites, built for the rail- or trolley-riding commuters of 1900 or 1910, with a supply of obsolete housing just about ready for the low-income market. Discovering these caches of obsolescent structures, low-income families have begun to appear in little ghettoes in some of the most "exclusive" suburban communities of the country. The signs of their coming are evident from a close reading of the 1960 population census data, which show widespread population declines in the slum areas of the old cities and substantial increases among the identifiable low-income groups in many suburban cities. And this is only the beginning.

The spread of the low-income groups outward from the old city center has been sparked not only by the spread of obsolescent housing but also by the redistribution of low-income jobs. As a rule, the jobs of the low-income groups have consisted of common labor on streets and docks, stevedoring in warehouses, factories, or yards, and menial help in the consumer trades. Practically every sector of employment in which low-wage labor has predominated is to be found drifting outward away from the old slum neighborhoods. The warehouses, factories, and consumer trades have followed the trend; and while the docks have remained anchored to their

waterside locations, they have been giving up their economic function to trucking terminals located further out from the center. The low-income groups, therefore, have been faced with a growing need to keep up with their peripatetic jobs.

It is evident, however, that many have not yet looked for newer living space or have not succeeded in their search. This grows apparent as one views the changes in the commuting streams that are beginning to appear in many cities. Outcommuting--the movement each morning of people from homes in the center portions of the urban area to jobs on the periphery--is growing fast. The spectacle of groups of blue-collar workers, travelling outward by car pool against the flow of incoming traffic, is now a common sight on the roads of many large cities. In fact, the spotty and fragmentary information on this phenomenon suggests that it may be one of the fastest-growing streams of traffic among the complex currents of our urban areas.

As far as the low-income groups are concerned, therefore, one sees a process of a constant turnover, a constant pushing outward to take possession of the housing hand-me-downs of the middle-income group. This is the trickle-down theory of progress in its most graphic form.

Distasteful as the trickle-down theory may be in the abstract, it seems to have worked in some measure to improve the housing of the poor in recent years. Between the 1950 housing census and the 1956 housing census, the number of so-called "substandard dwellings" in our major urban areas underwent a rather considerable decline. Of course, statistics which purport to measure any such abstraction as "substandard housing" are rarely invulnerable; and so it is with these. But there is no serious doubt that there has been a substantial upgrading in the housing stock available to the poor as the middle-income groups have fled to the suburbs from the advancing salients of the poor. In those urban areas where new home construction has been highest, the upgrading has been most apparent. As an added measure of the improv-

ing situation for the poor, the number of available vacancies in the major urban areas also seems to have gone up rather considerably between the two housing censuses.

In our concentration upon the trend in housing for the poor, however, we must never lose sight of the level. One needs only his eyes, his nose, and a willingness to walk through the slums of America's great cities to be aware that we are many leagues away from the goal of tolerable housing for all Americans. Besides, the disconcerting statistics of the 1956 housing census remind us that Negroes and other recognizable minority groups are suffering from a systematic economic discrimination in the housing market, paying more for comparable space than white families. On top of all this, the aspirations of the low-income groups may well be expanding faster than their actual living conditions.

Nonetheless, it is important to be aware that the trend is not clearly retrogressive. Once more there is no clear evidence of the taut stretching of a rubberband close to its breaking point, no indication of the building up of pressure to levels which the political vessel can no longer contain.

The Elite

The medium-income group and the poor, according to our argument, have made some kind of adjustment to the changing urban structure. But the well-to-do--that small but critically important group which is in a position to pay whatever may be demanded for the living space it desires--seem not to have fared as well.

At the turn of the century, it will be remembered, the well-to-do urban dweller had a number of satisfactory living choices. One possibility was to take a manion on Fifth Avenue, the Gold Coast, Nob Hill, or Rittenhouse Square. Here, one could have propinquity to the office and the theater, the easy use of the city streets in the evening or on weekends, and only a minimum of exposure to the relatively localized and compact slums. Alternatively--or in

addition--one could maintain a home in an exclusive suburb, barely thirty or forty minutes from an office in the central city by way of the new suburban trains.

In the past fifty or sixty years, however, these comparatively idyllic arrangements have gradually been threatened. As the mansions of the downtown areas have grown obsolete, it has not been easy to replace them with equally adequate quarters in the same neighborhoods. Apartment houses, office buildings, parking lots, and slums have swallowed up the accessible land; and even if money was no object, in a country in which the Protestant ethic still prevails it would be unconscionable to pay $500,000 or so for a site on which to locate a private residence.

Besides, the city streets were no longer quite so easily used in off-hours. The middle class was gradually abandoning the use of mass transit as a means of off-hour travel in the central business district and was crowding the downtown streets with private cars and taxicabs. The slums were gradually ringing the central business district in neighborhoods many miles deep. The possibility of a mansion in town was no longer anywhere nearly as attractive as it had been in America's Age of Innocence.

At the same time, the exclusive suburban location was falling prey to another kind of outside pressure. The inexorable tide of the middle class was surrounding the elite suburb, infiltrating the empty land where it could, crowding the little shopping centers, undermining the air of exclusivity and remoteness which had once prevailed.

There were two escapes available to the well-to-do, and they availed themselves of both. One was to abandon the town house for the exclusive flat in an expensive apartment house. In many big cities, therefore, elaborate apartments began to appear in or very near the central business district--overlooking a park or a river, or dominating a hill. This compromise was not an altogether felicitous one, of course. Though it allowed the rich to re-

main close to offices and theaters, it did not deal with the problems of comfort and security on the public streets.

Another alternative--one especially attractive to families with children--has been to flee from the sound of the subdivision steamshovel into even more remote settlements in the country. Instead of spending 30 or 40 minutes on the daily suburban trains to downtown offices, the well-to-do have taken to spending an hour or more on their way to or from the office. To heap difficulty on difficulty, the services of the suburban trains have not grown better with the years; for reasons which will grow clear a little later on, the suburban services have deteriorated in quality and frequency.

These problems might have been mitigated in some degree if the jobs of the elite, like the jobs of the middle-income groups and the poor, had shown any tendency to move out rapidly toward the suburbs. Some, of course, did. A number of insurance companies and a few large central offices, responding to the pressures of their commuting executives, moved from their downtown locations to more felicitous surroundings in the suburbs. For the most part, however, the compulsion of executives to remain in the central business district has been very strong. The delicate problems of face-to-face communication to which we earlier referred have prevented them from moving very far from the tight-woven mass of which they are a part. Typically, therefore, the executive suites of the large manufacturing enterprises, the advertising agencies, the banks, and the law firms have remained firmly anchored to the central business district.

There is still another reason why the plight of the central city is calculated to draw more response from the elite of the urban area than from the rank and file of the middle-income groups or of the poor. In every major city, there is a group of substantial business interests which are immobilized in the city--prevented from sharing in the swifter rates of suburban

growth. Under many state laws, the chartered banks of the central city are prohibited from opening branches freely in the suburbs. In other cases, the public utilities of the central city are prevented from extending their franchises into the suburbs. In still others, department stores with heavy investments sunk in their central city locations are eyeing with concern the need to make new investments in the growing suburban areas. And there are cases, as well, in which central city newspapers fear an irretrievable loss of circulation and advertising from the drift of homes and jobs to outside locations. One can safely predict, therefore, how the articulate and influential elite of the urban area is likely to react to the problem of increasing remoteness between the central business district and the suburbs.

The attachment of the rich to the central city, however, is not based solely upon the need for shortening the journey-to-work or upon business interest. At least in equal measure, the attachment derives from sentiment, tradition, and avocational ties. These latter are made up of many strands. One, for instance, is the uniqueness of the institutions to which the rich tend to belong. Few urban areas can support more than one Harvard Club, one Council on Foreign Relations, one Union Club. Given only one such institution in the area, its location is bound to be at the center of the urban mass. In this respect, therefore, the rich who want both the exclusivity of the suburbs and propinquity to their clubs are less well-situated than the middle class who can find their bowling league, their VFW post, or their bridge club reproduced in any suburban area close to home.

Another strand in the tie to the central city is created by the role of the rich as supporters of the cultural activities of the city. No list of sponsors for the leading orchestra or the leading art museum of any urban area fails to include a generous sampling of the leading families. Often the sponsorship goes back in an uninterrupted chain over many generations. Once again, therefore, the rich are the victims of the urban area's spread, pulling them from the

neighborhoods in which their absorbing interests lie.

To understand today's growing literature of protest against the metropolis, however, we have to take cognizance of the reactions of elite who do not derive their status from wealth. They are typified, perhaps caricatured, by the man who, when asked why he felt the need to settle in a metropolis of seven or eight million, said with all sincerity and accuracy, "I need seven or eight million from whom to select my 70 or 80 friends." They are people who find the mass media and the mass forms of amusement inadequate for their needs. Commonly, they include the individuals who are more than casual onlookers in their relation to the cultural institutions peculiar to the established city--the museum, the symphony orchestra, the art galleries, the foreign policy clubs, the social workers' organizations, the public hospitals. Sometimes they are not well-to-do. And when they are not, their bitterness against the spread of the urban areas is greatest of all. For they do not have the ability of the rich to maintain propinquity to their interests in the city by buying luxury downtown space.

Add to these groups the influential sectors of the opinion-forming elite of the community: the political organizations, built up on a carefully developed structure of city political clubs; the older church parishes, rich in tradition, yet reliant for their support on neighborhood parishioners; the director of the symphony orchestra, the curator of the public or private museum, the superintendent of the adult education program. The wonder of it is that the cry for the preservation of the old city or for improved access to its center is not even louder and more insistent than it is.

And yet, if my analysis has any validity at all, we may have an answer to the riddle of the curious passivity of America to its urban problems. To most Americans, the personal experience of urban living seems not one of personal retrogression but of continuous improvement. By moving out of the slag heaps of the worked-out city, they have improved their surround-

ings sufficient for a generation. The worries of a Riesman, the strivings of a Mumford, are inarticulate, scarce-comprehensible murmurings. Let the central city weep; let the sociologists fume; except for such intractable problems as death, war, and taxes, things are getting slightly better all the time.

From time to time as I speculate about the urban problem, a recurrent image passes through my mind. In my daydream, I see four monkeys loose in a swiftly flowing river. One monkey has managed to get astride a stalk of bananas and is calmly and happily munching at his meal, seemingly unconcerned about the possibility of drowning. A second monkey is clinging desperately to the first monkey's banana stalk--filled partly with hope and partly with terror.

The other two simians are far less passive in their reactions. Apparently convinced of their peril, they are thrashing vigorously about the stalk in an obvious effort at survival. It is a bit uncertain whether monkeys three and four are trying to tow the stalk to shore or simply to get there themselves. And it is also unclear whether their efforts are likely to upset the stalk before the shore is reached. But there is not much doubt about the vigor of their activity.

I am sure that those of you who followed my analysis of yesterday evening will have no problems in the interpretation of this daydream. Our relaxed banana-eating monkey, of course, stands for the middle-income group--a group whose concern about the problems of urban growth is, on the whole, at far less than fever pitch. His frightened and impotent companion in the water represents the struggling poor, their fate dependent in good part on the leavings of the middle-income group. The energetic actors, of course, are the well-to-do and the urban elite; aware of their perils, they do not propose to drift forever--though their current action may be doing little to succor either themselves or their two companions.

Tonight, I shall be concentrating upon the existing programs of urban reform. I hope to make clear what has motivated them, what they have tried to accomplish, and what the relevance of those accomplishments may be to the most pressing of our urban problems as I see them. At the same time, I propose to demonstrate that the most widely accepted and fami-

liar versions of "the urban problem" place an unduly heavy emphasis upon the particular concerns of the well-to-do and the elite. This is a fact which I think accounts for the peculiar lack of response to these problems by the body politic. I shall then try to restate the nature of our urban problems in a way which takes cognizance of the interests of a much larger slice of the people who live in urban areas. A recognition of these wider interests, it seems to me, is on indispensable prerequisite to public support and public action.

Land-Use Planning

If a major object of our existence were to create great cities of beauty and grace, there would be something to be said in favor of dictatorship. As a rule, the great cities of the past have been the cities of the powerful state--cities in which a dominant king or governing body has had the power and the will to impose its land-use strictures upon an obedient populace. Weak or divided local governments, responsive to the push and pressure of the heterogeneous interest groups which make up a city, have rarely managed to intervene enough to prevent the unpalatable kind of growth which typifies our larger American urban areas.

Up to a few decades ago, there was no serious effort by any American city to take a hand in shaping its development. Such efforts in the United States date back to the year 1916 when New York City put America's first comprehensive zoning law on its statute books. By that time, an elite group of New Yorkers could already see the outlines of some of their emerging problems. Land in downtown New York was being used incongruously and wastefully. Fish markets and ancient warehouses stood side by side with temples of finance and giant office buildings. Tiny streets, built for another age, were being choked with traffic and darkened by towering skyscrapers.

The problem was not solely that of downtown land use, however. Real estate taxes were growing, seemingly without a limit. Besides, the difficulties of daily ingress to the shops and

offices of the central business district were now beginning to appear, as more and more citizens moved off Manhattan Island into the distant reaches of Brooklyn, the Bronx, and New Jersey. And in the other great cities of the country, similar developments were also beginning to take visible shape.

Something had to be done to arrest the deterioration of the community. The closest approximation to the peremptory powers of the ancient kings was land-use planning, planning achieved through the use of zoning ordinances. So the first pioneering steps were taken.

It should not go unnoticed that the strongest support came from a part of the community which the casual observer might have considered least ready for it--from the merchants, the financiers, and the daily press, whose ideology seemed almost unqualifiedly committed to the proposition that the interference of government in the economic affairs of men was unwise and unproductive. The reasons why these groups were the first to rise in support of so drastic a use of the police power, however, will already be clear to my listeners. These groups more than any other--partly because of sentiment, partly because of offended values, partly because of self-interest--had the strongest stakes in changing the course of the urban areas' development pattern.

The wisdom of some kind of land-use planning, however, was also apparent to many groups outside the central business district. Many communities were beginning to appreciate that when abattoirs sat alongside high-priced houses, neither benefited from the contact. When an industrial area blocked access to a residential neighborhood, both were hurt by the propinquity. When enclaves of land were spoiled by nearby uses, and remained unused, neglected, and overlain with weeds and trash, no one gained from the loss of precious space. Community after community, therefore, acquired the legal power to regulate the use of land, until today most of our urban areas are blanketed by a patchquilt of land-use regulations.

But there was slippage, considerable slippage, between the abstract concepts that justified land-use planning and the actual practice of the art. In the older sprawling cities of America, the zoning tool had come too late to have much effect on the style and pattern or urban life. Most of the land of the downtown areas was already covered with structures, whose uses were largely fixed until the time when there would be some economic reason for razing the buildings and beginning all over again. And when the opportunity arose to tear down some antique hulk and to use the land once more, the new use proposed by the eager redeveloper, as often as not, was inconsistent with the zoning plan. In these circumstances, what zoning board could hold out for very long against the pressure and importuning of the redeveloper? What, after all, was the board proposing instead--more decay, more delay? Was it against progress? Surely, some accommodation, some flexibility was possible.

Even when the land was not already encumbered by structures, many features of the older cities already were fixed, substantially influencing how the rest would develop. For one thing, the ossified street grid itself was in place, fixing some of the dimensions of homes and industrial sites. For another, the railroad yards, the stockyards, the power plants, and the garbage dumps had established the general character of many half-occupied outlying neighborhoods. Then, too, there were the policies of the financial institutions which were expected to provide the mortgage money for any proposed new structures. One could hardly expect them to finance a $20,000 home in a $10,000 neighborhood; to underwrite the long-term collection of little parcels over a lengthy period of time; to gamble on the possibility that the city fathers might close an old street or open a new one in order to make some venture possible. For large areas of the city, the die was cast; the city was bound to be more of what it already was.

To the extent that land-use planning has much effect, therefore, it has been in open

unencumbered territory where, for one reason or another, a determined and united citizenry has sought to impose some clear pattern of use upon the land. The most conspicuous kind of case in which the requisite openness and the requisite determination came together was in the exclusive suburban communities of the very rich.

You will recall my having observed that the growth of the urban areas had an unkindly effect upon the well-to-do. Their suburban communities had been invaded, their sense of exclusiveness and privacy destroyed by the irrepressible spread of middle-income subdivisions. By the 1920's, however, some exclusive communities were beginning to discover that they had the legal means for fighting back; zoning ordinances, vigorously and scrupulously applied, could arrest or divert the flow. Here and there, one began to encounter such ordinances--prohibitions against structures of less than such-and-such value, prohibitions against lots of less that so much size. Applied in timely fashion, these restrictions managed to preserve the sparse and splendid land-use pattern of a number of outstanding suburban communities.

Later on, following the lead of the pace-setters, various middle-income communities in the suburbs began to play at the same game. In their case, however, the strategy of land-use had to be a little different. Unlike the well-to-do, the middle-income group had no desire to exclude members from their communities who might be able to share the mounting tax burdens. Accordingly, they were prepared to admit some industrial plants in their midst, on the assumption that these could help finance the new schools and streets of the growing area. True, the plants could only be those of a certain type--quiet, well-mannered, giving off the aura of a college campus rather than an industrial nexus. But if they met the specifications, they were more than welcome.

Where the middle-income communities could exercise greatest freedom of action, however, was in seeing to it that the poor would be excluded from their precincts. Shacktowns,

of course, were already barred; the health and fire ordinances of most towns were sufficient to deal with these. But then there was always the risk that some enterprising builder might divide a site into handkerchief-sized lots, install the basic sanitary facilities, use concrete slabs or other utilitarian materials as his medium of construction, and provide the unaesthetic minimum of decent housing for the upper stratum of the poor. This was a possibility obviously to be avoided, not only for social reasons, but for fiscal reasons as well. Accordingly, the zoning laws and building ordinances were quickly developed to block off the possibility.

Most communities, too, whether middle- or upper-income in their style, have gradually become aware of another clear and present danger--the danger that the older and more commodious structures in their midst, too obsolete to be used much longer by the income group for which they were first designed, may be divided and subdivided into spaces for the poor. At this stage in a community's development, the monolithic facade of community interest is cracked, broken by the internal conflict between the holders of the new homes and the sellers of the old. This development will not easily be prevented, therefore. Here and there, communities will be invaded by the poor.

Once more, the rich will be pushed outward, even further from their jobs and interests in the central city. Once more, the middle-income group will move on, placidly pulling their job market with them. Once more, the poor will spread out, in the expanded leavings of their financial betters.

There are three or four aspects of the pattern which need concern us, whether we are poor or rich, city-oriented or otherwise. The first point to be made, of course, is that land-use planning in any comprehensive sense really does not exist in our larger urban areas. What does exist is a complex game of chess among localities, each attempting to palm off the undesired applicants for space upon their neighboring communities. This is warfare, not plan-

ning. Those who are "for" local planning in any community are dubbed altruistic and "good"; those against are "bad." The purposes of those who are against planning may be no less self-centered than the purposes of those who are for; but neither position must be confused with altruism or with the interests of the urban area as a whole.

The kind of land-use planning that is needed for the major urban areas of America is planning which takes cognizance of the total land-use needs of the area. The localities will have to turn in their weapons of war to some authority whose mandate is broader than their own and will have to be prepared to accept the decisions which issue from that higher level. The authority may be made up of local representatives it may be something less than a court of last resort. But until such an authority exists in some effective form, we shall have to accept the fact that the planning which exists in our urban areas is incapable of doing much to improve the area as an economic or social unit.

We seem so far from having achieved the necessary organization for effective urban planning that it may appear gratuitous to speak about the policies and techniques of a group charged with that objective. So I shall confine myself to no more than a few footnotes on the subject. One of the first objectives of a group of this kind must be that of defining and preserving the land areas which will be needed for public use in time to prevent their being completely preempted by private uses. This should not be confused with a plea on my part for more parks and more green belts. I have little knowledge and few convictions on the question whether the public needs or would use more open space for recreation. It is a much more simple point that I am making. While each locality concerns itself with land for its immediate public purposes, no level of government really worries about the preservation of land for more general public use, whatever that use may be. The localities usually try to push common land-use needs off their shoulders onto the shoulders of others, "Everyone wants the water, but no one

wants the reservoir," to quote a waggish phrase which is particularly apt for a Princeton audience. And while the localities are too close to the problem, the state government is usually too far away. Few states can be made to concern themselves very much with the detailed land-use needs of their urban areas. So we are back to a familiar problem in government structure, that of creating a body of authority which is bigger than a bread-box but smaller than an elephant--more extensive in its scope than the localities but less extensive than the state.

One more point of general applicability. Events of the past few decades, as I read them, are proving that the zoning powers which are usually reserved to the city or to the suburban community are simply not enough to ensure the use or reuse of land according to any given land-use pattern on which general agreement had previously been reached. The pressures upon a zoning board applied by a private investor who is ready and anxious to move ahead on some plan of redevelopment are so great as almost to be irresistible.

This is a problem of course, which everyone concerned with land-use planning appreciates very well. As a consequence, an old concept is being brushed off and re-examined with considerable interest for its possible application to the current planning problem. This is the notion that the authorities which are responsible for planning the use of land should have the power not only to zone land but also to buy various kinds of property rights short of outright ownership. This property right could be an easement for limited public purposes; it could be a development right which excluded certain private uses from the land; or any one of half a dozen other forms of interest. In any case, the sacred institution of property--one of the most powerful of symbols among the lares and penates of our current civilization--could be turned to the end of ensuring the effective use of a potentially scarce resource, the land.

Rebuilding the City

Those who have been concerned with transforming our urban areas have not confined their efforts to the use of such feeble tools as zoning and land-use planning. There have been bolder and more spectacular efforts--the rebuilding of downtown New Haven, the rebirth of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, the execution of New York's Lincoln Center, and so on. These great schemes of bold and aggressive doers have added hope and cheer to those of us who cherish the vitality of the cities.

In surveying these works, however, there are two debts we must discharge. We have an obligation to the men who conceived and executed these latter-day Herculean labors to express our admiration for their efforts. At the same time, we owe it to ourselves to appraise these results in cold and dispassionate terms, to determine how relevant they may be to the total problem of urban renewal.

To gain this perspective, the best vantage point is a helicopter. Hover motionless over America's major cities and you will shortly be impressed by two facts: As a rule, only minute portions of the older areas of our cities have so far been subjected to rebuilding and renewal in the 20th century. In New York City, for instance--a city whose activities in this field have been more extensive than those of any other in the nation--all of the publicly supported renewal projects undertaken over the past quarter century do not cover as much as three square miles of city surface. Second, the areas of the city which have been the subject of the most intensive renewal activity tend generally to be in or very near the city's central business district. Out beyond the comparatively tiny compact central business districts of our giant urban areas, the gray, monotonous jumble of obsolete structures extends almost uninterruptedly in all directions.

The tiny land coverage of the publicly supported urban renewal programs is certainly not

due to a lack of crying need. By almost anyone's aesthetic or structural standards, literally hundreds of square miles in the urban areas of America should long ago have been torn down. Yet there have been periods of time when uncommitted Federal funds have gone begging for lack of acceptable projects.

Why should acceptable projects have been so hard to find? There are a number of answers to the question. First of all, one has to understand that an urban renewal project is usually a partnership between governmental and private interests; the government procures the site, using its powers of condemnation as necessary, and it turns the site over to private redevelopers at a substantial discount from the acquisition price. The private redeveloper, therefore, must see a possibility for profit; he must see an opportunity to rebuild on the site and to find renters or buyers for the new properties.

At this point, our harrassed redeveloper is between the devil and the deep blue sea. Shall he plan to build a little patch of new construction--a small oasis in a sea of decaying structures? If so, though his costs and commitments may be small, his chances of finding renters for his redeveloped properties will be small as well. For who among those capable of paying the $40 or $50 per room for rent would want to wade through the filth and insecurity of the rundown, obsolete neighborhood in order to reach his concrete-and-brick oasis in the city?

Alternatively, then, should our redeveloper cut a wide swath through the city, with a giant redevelopment covering half a square mile or so? But that alternative is just as unprepossessing as the first. It demands the closing of streets, the rerouting of traffic, the reorganization of utilities. It entails staggering financial commitments. And it requires a judgment of market demand for a supply of housing so large as to frighten off the hardiest developer and the most intrepid financier. In a word, the problem seems utterly impossible. Almost impos-

sible, anyway. For there is one place in the built-up portions of the old cities where, with energy and imagination, there is just a chance that a good-sized project may be carried off. That place is in or near the central business district.

The reasons why the central business district should be attractive for redevelopment when the rest of the city usually offers so little attraction are all implicit in what I have said earlier. First, the central business district, unlike the rest of the older portions of the obsolescent cities of America, continues to harbor some elements of vitality and growth. The jobs which demand face-to-face communication in America continue to increase as more of our economic activity is concentrated in financial institutions, central offices, law offices, and the like. Not all cities share in this growth, but many do. As a consequence, a number of large central business districts in America promise to register an increase in jobs. Even those that do not show an absolute increase may experience some upgrading in the jobs they harbor. More executives are likely to appear at the center even if the number of clerks, dishwashers, goods handlers, and factory hands declines. This is one of the forces which explains why it is possible for Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle and Philadelphia's Penn Center to rise out of the ashes and find a basis for survival.

The appearance of a larger number of elite jobs at the center, coupled with the growing remoteness of the exclusive communities and golf courses, stimulates the demand for luxury housing close by the central business district. The amounts involved are not very great, measured in terms of the size of the city as a whole. But the demand is nicely concentrated in a tiny area--in or near the central business district, preferably with a pleasant prospect of river or harbor. When all the elements of demand and subsidy are put together, they sometimes provide the basis for tearing down the structures in the thinned-out slums of the ancient city and building imposing new structures on the site.

There may be another major reason, however, why the central business district tends to capture the lion's share of urban redevelopment projects. If one could plumb the minds of the leadership of any large urban community and look upon the urban area as he sees it, I am confident of the image that would emerge. Instead of seeing the central business district as an area containing one-tenth the city's land and one-twentieth its resident population, the central business district would be seen dominating the image. This is the target of the elite's daily commuting trips. It is the area which contains the city hall, the museums, the theater, the night clubs, and the apartments of friends and associates. It is the area in which the history and the tradition of the city are centered. In short, it is the area that contains almost all that matters in the city for most of its civic leadership. No wonder that there should be a strong bias--unintentional though it may be--in favor of the central business district as a redevelopment site.

Of course, even when the proposed redevelopment is in or near the central business district, there are difficulties to be overcome. In the usual case, the structures that must be razed have been used to house the very poor. No matter how far an ancient slum may have passed its peak of crowding, it still can shelter a considerable number of families. By a process which we have already described, the families that remain tend to be the most defenseless of the slum dwellers--the oldest, the sickest, or the least able. The others, if my analysis is at all right, have already moved on. Some of the stories which emerge in connection with any account of the problems of relocation, therefore, are calculated to wring the heart of the most callous of observers.

Quite apart from the individual misery occasioned by relocation, one may very well raise questions about the wrecking operation from another point of view. Granting the fact that the situation for the poor is improving, not retrogressing, are we yet prepared to say that it is de-

sirable to cut down the supply of housing available to them? Should we not limit the amount of redevelopment to the amount of low-cost public housing that can be built nearby?

These are the questions that public-spirited groups are prone to ask. Reasonable though these questions may appear upon their face, they seem to me to lead to a public policy which is misdirected, distorted, and unhelpful.

That the poor need housing, I have no doubt. But their housing needs are growing far faster in the suburbs than in the old cities. It is in the suburbs that one finds the growing job markets for unskilled labor. Unless we are prepared to impose on the low-income groups the added burden of commuting outward every day from the older city sections, we are doing them no favor to rebuild housing for them in the city centers.

True, something is better than nothing. But "nothing" is not the alternative here. The poor, I said earlier, tend to create their own housing supply simply by ostentatiously bidding for it in the older suburbs. I would myself be inclined to speed that process. Instead of building low-priced subsidized housing in the old cities, I would bend every effort to speed the movement of the poor to the older suburbs. Two measures in particular could contribute to that end. First, the money spent on low-cost public housing construction and operation could be used instead as a direct subsidy to assist families in the payment of their rent. Second, the poor of the cities, handicapped by ignorance and fright, could be helped by public agencies in the search for suburban space. This kind of assistance need not be limited to those families which may have been dispossessed by urban renewal projects; in fact, such families are less likely to be outstanding candidates for suburban living space than some of the younger and more aggressive breadwinners who have already shown sufficient energy to pull themselves out of the oldest of the slum areas. Help in locating better space, therefore, ought to be more widely available to people who live in areas of substandard housing.

Indeed, my strong inclination would be to provide public help for the poor not only in their search for better housing but in the whole process of adaptation to the urban environment. The case for such assistance is especially strong in areas where the poor consist principally of newly arrived immigrants. In this setting, a little help can go a long way--help in looking for a job, help in finding living space, help in locating the requisite medical assistance or educational facilities. This is no new idea. But now that we have recognized the utility of easing the adaptation process through the manning of an agricultural field service, a depressed areas bill, and an overseas Peace Corps, perhaps we may be moved to apply the principle more broadly.

Finally, it would be worthwhile to experiment with the relaxation of building codes, in order to make a $6,000 or $8,000 structure a possibility once more. Obviously, one would not want to relax provisions which are genuinely essential to health and safety. On the other hand, it is a little ironic to lock the poor into structures in the old city which are both unhealthful and unsafe in the interests of protecting them from lesser risks in a much more healthful and safe setting.

Urban renewal, however, need not be limited to the type of operation we have just discussed. Some of the land uses of our major American cities, whether or not they were appropriate for the 19th and early 20th century, are ludicrously inappropriate today. The placement of the railroad yards in most cities is a striking case in point. In Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, Washington, Pittsburgh, and many other urban areas, the railroad yards preempt some of the choicest and most attractive sites of the metropolis--close inside the urban mass, situated on river banks. The volume of freight passing through the yards goes down each year. The freight that is left can often be much better handled from new locations at the edge of the urban mass.

One day, perhaps, when present patterns of rail freight haulage have gone to join the dodo bird, the giant sites will be abandoned and may revert to other uses, such as river-front recreation or attractive housing. But before that happens in the ordinary course, if it ever does, railroad managements and regulatory bodies will have to be roused from their lethargy or will have to be overrun by some higher authority. And one way or another, the cities and towns involved will have to be persuaded to relinquish their tenacious grip on a tax-paying property, albeit a dying one, before the property is utterly dead as a revenue producer.

The case of the railroad property illustrates a much more general problem of many of America's older cities. Beyond the immediate limits of the central business district, extending deep in every direction, are many miles of structures which will not be recaptured within our lifetimes. In these areas, in the normal course, we can expect the structures to continue to decay, the populations gradually to decline and thin out, the jobs slowly to fall off in number. The wistful anticipation that young middle-class couples or old childless ones may come flocking back to reclaim these obsolescent neighborhoods is, as I have insisted, quite groundless. Of course, we will always be able to identify some cases out of our personal experiences which fit any pattern we seek. But even though there may be a crack or two in the picture window, it will not be sufficient to spark a large-scale return from the suburbs to the central cities.

I can, however, envisage two contingencies which may set this prophecy on its head. One is the possibility that we may simply run out of urban land in America. If I have analyzed the process of spread correctly, however, this is unlikely to occur for a considerable time to come. The second possibility is that of recapturing and redeveloping urban neighborhoods in vast parcels--by the square mile rather than by the acre. Once a piece of real estate has been acquired which is so large as to insulate it utterly from the moldering neighborhoods around it--once it is sufficiently large to be equipped with its own parks, schools, libraries, stores, and

social structure--then the possibility of successfully reusing the land for middle-income living increases considerably.

To be sure, such a pattern of redevelopment conjures up an image of the Golden Ghetto set down in surrounding squalor. But until the social values of America's middle-income groups have undergone a revolution, this may be the only pattern on which the middle-income groups would consider reusing the inlying sites of the decaying cities. And if the middle-income groups balk at reusing these sites, there is no other use of which I am aware that has such extensive land-using needs as to offer a real alternative.

The Movement of People

When we look at the problems of moving people across the spreading urban areas, the theme which has recurred so often in the analysis rears its head once more. The middle-income group has not done badly; the poor have solved some old problems and acquired some new ones; but the well-to-do and the other groups with abiding attachments to the central business district--these have really had to make major adjustments as a consequence of the outward drift.

One set of reasons why this conclusion seems justified has already been suggested. As far as much of the middle-income group is concerned, homes and jobs have both moved outward in self-reinforcing cycle. The mode of transportation has changed, from foot to trolley to suburban car. But there is no clear evidence and no reason to assume that the middle-income families have suffered a rise of time-costs or money-costs in getting from their homes to the various points in the urban area that they feel a need to visit.

Of course, the middle-income group is extremely heterogeneous. While some may have reduced their commuting problems over the years, others have certainly increased them. Those who have been unable to free themselves from job locations in the central business district, for instance, have had some of the commuting problems of the rich while possessing fewer resources

to deal with them. But for the most part, a beneficent government--stimulated by pressures from the middle-income groups and from the producers of concrete, rubber tires, and gasoline--has provided the system of roads essential for commuting between the dispersed suburbs.

The poor, meanwhile, have begun to confront a new kind of transportation problem, one to which we alluded a little earlier. Some of them have had to face the difficulties of the reverse commuting trip, and more are likely to face it in the future. Reverse commuting presents problems calculated to try men's souls. One difficulty stems from the fact that the public carrier schedules were never set up to deal with the pattern; and few public carriers see enough in such business today to justify changing their schedules. But more serious still is the fact that the final destination of the out-commuter is not some giant hub where all streams end, such as the central business district, but rather many diffused points in the thinly settled suburbs. As a result, after the commuter leaves the highway or the railroad line on which the public conveyance wends its way, he still has a final phase of his journey to overcome.

Wherever they can, therefore, the out-commuters travel by car. Their secondhand vehicles, crammed to the doors, can be seen headed out from many American cities on any weekday morning. This is their "solution" but it is not an easy one. There is still the problem of financing the purchase of the car; and, if that can be handled with the combined resources of the car pool, there is also the problem of storing and maintaining it somewhere in the crowded city from which the daily journey starts.

The heaviest brunt of the transportation problem, however, falls upon those whose jobs remain stubbornly anchored to the central business district and whose style of living demands the exclusivity and elegance of a thinly settled suburb. Apart from the fact that their trip to the central business district has lengthened with every decade as they have been forced further outward from the city, their mode of transport--the suburban train--has fallen on evil days.

Some of the reasons for the decline of the suburban train are, or course, apparent to you all. Trains do not live by peak traffic alone. The most lucrative source of business is the sort that can be handled in off hours and on week ends without the need to add men or equipment. Yet this is the kind of business which has declined the most. In off hours, in evenings, and on week ends, the temptation to use the family car for travel is stronger than ever.

While the most lucrative business of the suburban trains has evaporated, the most stubborn element of their costs has gone up. Unlike the producers of automobiles, steel, or chemicals, the railroads have been unable to figure out ways to boost the productivity of their workforce--to make one trainman do what two trainmen did before. At the same time, without getting more for their money, the railroads have had to match the pay boosts of other industries. The upshot has been that the passenger business of the railroads has slipped inexorably into the red. The response of the railroads is one with which you are all familiar--they have cut their service and their schedules to the bone.

The problem has been an explosive one for the elite group which rides the suburban trains to the central city. I say "elite group" because the number involved is so small--perhaps three or four hundred thousands on the whole of the East Coast, probably well under a million for the country as a whole.

Some of you will be puzzled by this figure. Aren't the number employed in the central business districts of all great cities of America many times larger than a million? What of all the others; don't they have transportation problems as well? Of course they do. But as long as they use transportation means other than the suburban railroads, their problems are of a different sort. Bear in mind that though office employment in many central business districts has been increasing, jobs in warehouses, plants, and stores have been shrinking. In many cities, therefore, <u>total</u> employment in the central business district is probably going down; in only a

few, including New York, may it be increasing a little.

Therefore, the people who travel to the central business district by means other than the suburban train--by bus or by subway, for example--do not face quite the difficulties confronting the suburban train rider. The more densely travelled bus routes are still a profitable operation, by and large. The subways, while suffering some of the same problems as the suburban railroads, are either municipally owned or securely tied to some form of public subsidy. With peak-hour traffic not increasing very much or actually declining, our rider-in-the-city is feeling no overwhelming pain.

But the suburban rider is in a much more serious jam. Despite his prominence and his power, he constitutes such an insignificant fraction of the body politic that he cannot easily gain support for his proposals to share in some form of public subsidy. In the end, he will probably be offered a feeble crutch of one sort or another. But until the nature of his proposals for subsidy change, he is unlikely to strike the kind of public chord of responsiveness and support which could fundamentally improve his position.

In order for the elite suburban commuter to make common cause with the public at large, he will have to redefine his problem. Instead of seeing it as a problem of quick and easy transportation to the central business district he will have to begin thinking of it as a problem of quick and easy transportation throughout the urban area. His solutions will have to offer promise not only for his own relatively circumscribed group but for the very much larger and much faster growing group whose commuting problem consists of moving from one low-density point in the diffused suburbs to another low-density point.

It is an open question whether mass transit can be made to work for this sort of diffused handling. If it can, radical physical innovation and reorganization are probably involved. There have been a number of provocative suggestions on how such a reorganization might be

achieved. These suggestions typically operate on the principle of carrying people through the central city rather than just to it--of collecting them in the suburbs, and redistributing part of them by way of the center to other suburban locations. The technical problems and capital costs involved in most of these suggestions are formidable, utterly beyond the innovating spirit, financial capacity, or legal scope of the present transit systems in most urban areas. The need for the creation of some new source of innovation and authority is patent.

The Problem of Government Structure

By now you will be familiar--perhaps too familiar--with the recurrent themes of these lectures. Though every member of urban society has his problems, the tendency to define urban problems in terms of those which hit the well-to-do and the elite most starkly has been particularly strong. This tendency has prevented the public acceptance of proposed remedies, because the remedies have been addressed to difficulties with which only a small fraction of society identifies itself.

The problems must be reformulated and the approach to their solution changed. In many cases, however, these solutions may involve disturbing shifts in the structure of local government. Run through your minds once again some of the proposals to which I have alluded in the course of my comments. I suggested earlier that we should stop using our techniques of land-use control as weapons for internecine warfare and begin using them genuinely for the control of land use in the urban areas; and I indicated that this would require suburban localities to give up their most treasured right--the right to keep unwanted neighbors from penetrating their neighborhoods. I suggested also that some authority larger than suburban government should be charged with the problem of reserving land for the common use of urban areas.

Subsequently, you will recall, I made some proposals on the subjects of urban housing and urban redevelopment. Here, too, my suggestions implied some form of governmental structure

whose responsibilities were larger than those of existing local governments: the proposals that the urban poor be offered low-cost housing in the suburbs rather than cities; that experiments be made with the relaxation of urban building codes in order to make a $6,000 or $8,000 house a reality; that steps be taken to recapture such areas as the under-used railroad yards or the ancient industrial districts of the archaic cities. On none of these fronts can existing local governments be expected to make the first move.

When I turn to the question of transportation I am once more pushed to the need for a level of government larger than that of the suburban localities. I cannot envisage the adoption and execution of any plan for an integrated transportation system in a major urban area unless an area authority exists which is charged with the job. In various urban areas, the germs of such an organization exist. In most instances, however, its role is too circumscribed to allow it to launch on any plan really appropriate to the area's needs.

Apart from the question of adequate authority, there is another reason why some governmental arrangements are needed. Once a locality gives up control over its land use, it gives up a measure of control over its budgetary structure. Once it is required to submit to land takings, public housing locations, and transportation grid changes over which it has little control, its budgetary responsibilities become even more difficult to discharge. Some mechanism needs to be devised, therefore, for a reshuffling of revenues inside the urban area.

I do not think that metropolitan government is likely to be the answer; it offends too many traditions and presents too many constitutional difficulties. Instead, I anticipate that a number of governmental techniques, already developed to some extent, will be applied much more rapidly and more extensively. One is the creation of the special transportation district and transportation authority, an approach already evident in a number of major urban areas. The creation of such authorities is, of course, only one needed step. There are also the questions of techno-

logical innovation and financing. This is a challenge for enterprise--a challenge to which a number of major American equipment producers are already beginning to show some kind of response. If they move too slowly, however, it is not difficult to foresee that the Federal government may be stimulated to take a more active hand.

Another trend which I expect will enlarge the opportunities for urban planning derives from the activities of the Federal government outside the transportation field. The prospect for a unified Federal Department of Urban Affairs opens up new vistas in urban planning. With the power to dispense funds in the housing field, to stimulate planning studies, and to influence the activities of other Federal agencies which affect urban growth, such as the Bureau of Public Roads and the National Park Service, the new department might well exert a significant impact on the future shape of urban areas.

Finally, innovations in the governmental role may take the form of an extension of the substantive functions of state governments and an expansion of their role as collectors of taxes and dispensers of local grants-in-aid. There is nothing new about this process, any more than in the creation of special transportation authorities. But any great expansion in the fiscal role of the states would reduce the need on the part of local communities to raise their revenues through the real estate tax and to impose land-use controls based upon fiscal considerations. In the end, the states themselves may take a hand in the planning of land use for their urban districts as a whole.

You may well say that, in suggesting that new governmental authorities must be created in order to handle our urban problems, I have opened up greater problems that I have sought to solve in this paper. This could well be. In that case, I can only console myself with the familiar parable of the ant and the grasshopper. The grasshopper dreads the winter months when he will have neither food nor lodging. The ant advises him to change himself into a cockroach. The

grasshopper is delighted with the advice, but asks how this can be done. "I have given you the objective," says the ant, "now you work out the details."

SEMINAR DISCUSSION

Following is a transcript of a seminar held at the Joint Center for Urban Studies on October 20, 1961, at which Professor Vernon discussed his lectures. In addition to Professor Vernon, those persons named in the transcript are:

CHARLES ABRAMS, Member of the Joint Center for Urban Studies and Visiting Professor of City Planning, MIT.

EDWARD C. BANFIELD, Member of the Joint Center for Urban Studies and Shattuck Professor of Urban Government, Harvard.

MARTHA DERTHICK, Publications Director, Joint Center for Urban Studies.

CHARLES M. HAAR, Member of the Faculty Committee, Joint Center for Urban Studies, and Professor of Law, Harvard.

MARTIN MEYERSON, Director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies and Williams Professor of City Planning and Urban Research, Harvard.

LLOYD RODWIN, Chairman of the Faculty Committee, Joint Center for Urban Studies, and Professor of Land Economics, MIT.

THOMAS A. SULLIVAN, Member of the Joint Center for Urban Studies and Boston City Councillor.

JAMES Q. WILSON, Member of the Joint Center for Urban Studies and Lecturer on Government, Harvard.

Mr. Meyerson: I am very delighted to say that Ray Vernon has not kept a promise, made some time ago, that he had delivered his last comments on the city before returning for all time to international affairs. I just learned the other day that the Stafford Little Lectures are not the final but only the penultimate commentaries by Ray Vernon, and that he has been seduced once again into a set of final comments on the city. So that it is with great pleasure that we hold this seminar today--a seminar that will not be the epitaph of Ray Vernon's views on the city, but perhaps even the beginning of a new round of concern.

Mr. Vernon: I open this subject up with a rather considerable amount of trepidation on two or three different counts. First of all, I had not observed that the successive farewell tours of Sophie Tucker improved in quality. Besides, what I've done in these lectures and what I want to review this afternoon is a subject in which I am essentially an amateur. I learned about cities by trying to figure out what had brought them to their current shape and where they were likely to be headed, given certain assumptions about policy. In the process I learned a great deal, but I didn't myself dabble in policy because my job never required it. The third reason why I hesitate to enter into this business is that what I have to suggest in the way of policy is so outrageous from the viewpoint of most professionals in the field that the typical reaction may be equivalent to what would occur if someone were to utter a loud belch at a formal dinner. The belch has its place, but not at a formal dinner; and I am not at all sure that my prescriptions are usefully proposed to a group which is already by and large committed to a line so diametrically at odds with the kind of approach suggested in these lectures.

I don't know the extent to which I need repeat the materials in these lectures. I shall compromise between a complete presentation and something one can say in ten or fifteen minutes.

First off, I need not tell you the main facts of the changing shape of urban areas in the United States. I only want to emphasize one or two points in this changing shape. Point No. 1 is that obviously both people and jobs are increasing much more rapidly in the newer parts of these areas than in the old. A sub-point under this general observation is that, as nearly as I can make out, about half the jobs in a metropolitan area move out simply because the people have moved out. They are so intimately related to the residential patterns that if for some exogenous reason people were to decide that they preferred to live in suburban areas, the response to this decision would be a near-automatic movement of about half the jobs in the urban area in that direction. Another 30 per cent--depending on the area, depending on the period, but say 30 per cent as an average--are moving outward from the central business district and from the old congested city center for causes which have common ground with the causes which are leading people to move their residences. These are problems of transportation, communication, congestion, space. And then there are perhaps twenty per cent of the jobs which cannot move and must stay in the old congested area. But not much more than this.

These latter jobs--I've dwelt on this point ad nauseum--tend more and more to constitute a group whose communication need isn't satisfied by the telephone or any other technique. Their communication contacts are a constantly-shifting group of persons whose specific identity can't be determined in advance, so they have to

set themselves down in a melange of prospective contacts. Other people stay behind as well, from a residential point of view--the very poor, the aged. And where there is immigration of some poor group--the Puerto Ricans or the Mexicans or the southern Negro--these people too, on a more transitional basis, are found in the central business district in largest numbers.

As one looks at the congested central cities of course he finds something of this pattern. Deep in the central business district, while the number of residents has declined, the number of jobs typically has not stood still. If it has declined, it has declined only a little, and sometimes it has risen rather considerably. Congestion measured by the use of the street surface has increased quite substantially because of the shift in the means of transportation. Populations of a certain kind have increased: the upper income groups, locked close around the central business district, have grown. Beyond the central business district, the poor, particularly the older poor, have spread out and used more space as the years have gone by.

Now, this is a terribly short-handed way of describing an extremely complex phenomenon, and I have no doubt it leaves major holes which will emerge in our discussion. But let's pass on and see what the shift means to the people who are affected by it. There are of course the banks, which are locked into the central city by the nature of their charter in most areas. There are the leading newspapers of any community, which find problems of advertising and distribution much more difficult as the central city population spreads out and as they face competition from a rather different kind of medium, the suburban newspapers. These city newspapers are characteristically the best in the area, the most distinguished, the ones with the richest histories, the

ones with the best writers and so on. The utilities of the city also face a problem, of course. They can't extend their franchises out beyond the city. So you begin with a hard nub of economic interest resistant to the outward shift.

And another group which is of course deeply affected is the elite, these communication-oriented people whose jobs cannot move out, but who as individuals in many cases want wide open spaces and spacious living for their children and themselves. This group is confronted with a dilemma. With each passing decade, to get the kind of exclusive neighborhood they seek, they are forced to move further and further away from their jobs, while commuting by a facility--you know the story--which moves downhill for a variety of economic reasons.

Some of the elite, of course, choose the alternative that is available to them because they have high incomes--to pay the 75 or 85 dollars a month per room which may be involved, and to live close by their jobs, close by their cultural interests in the central business district. But this is not really a complete solution. Their grandfathers would have had a town house close by their jobs on Fifth Avenue, and infinitely greater comfort, infinitely greater privacy; seen through the eyes of the elite therefore the changing structure of the central city is a clear retrogression. They cannot meet their problems as well as their fathers and grandfathers did. They are obviously being pushed hard by the changing structure of the urban area. Many of them of course have an additional difficulty that all their cultural ties, which are often considerable, and all their sentimental ties are in the central city. There are many cases of families with three generations of support of the symphony orchestra or three or four generations of support of the museum; the men belong to the university clubs--and no urban area is so

large as yet that it can support two Princeton clubs and two Harvard clubs. So that there is just one unique institution to which their social and cultural ties relate. Such an institution ordinarily is at the obvious point, down in the central business district. And this group is pulled further and further from these cultural and sentimental and business interests by the growing spread of the city.

Now the man who is hardest hit of all, of course, is the intellectual who has unique ties to the central business district but is not well-to-do. Because he cannot readily choose the 75-to-85-dollar rooms close by the central business district, as the well-to-do group may do, he is inexorably pushed away from the central business district. He doesn't have a choice and he exits muttering. These groups whom I have mentioned, while heavily represented among those of us who worry about urban areas and write about urban areas, constitute regretfully a very small section of the urban population.

Let's look at the urban process through the eyes of a larger group, through the eyes of someone in this vaguely defined middle-income group which, in the New York metropolitan region, used to live in Manhattan, then in the Bronx, then in Westchester, or in analogous areas in Philadelphia, Chicago, or San Francisco. These groups for the most part have found their jobs moving out with their residences and they have found their journey-to-work pattern being reoriented as time goes on. These groups for the most part are not concerned with the radial haul down into the central business district, because this is not where their jobs are. They are concerned largely with a circumferential or a diffused movement. As they look back upon their own life vista, it isn't clear to them that everything about the urban area has retrogressed. The somewhat squalid

apartment or tenement in which they once lived in congested surroundings, if this is where they came from, has been carefully sliced up vertically and horizontally, and a chunk of it has been made much more visible and put on the landscape and surrounded by a piece of green. As far as they're concerned, it's just too bad that the structure they own is more visible to their financial betters in the community; but they rather enjoy having the grass around the house, or at least they find it less disagreeable than being locked up in six-story structures, plastered side by side.

Remember, these are not the intellectuals. What they want out of life is to have access to their job, which for the most part has shifted outward, too; access to the bridge club, which is no unique institution and is not located in the central business district; access to the American Legion Post, of which there are many, not one. So for them, the problem of physical movement around the urban area is not seen in anything like the perspective in which the intellectual or the well-to-do slices of our community see their problems of movement. If the middle-income groups have problems, the problems consist in trying to figure out how to travel circumferentially or in some diffused way without getting into all kinds of traffic bottlenecks. Some of them may have a problem in open space; some may not. A significant proportion of them see another kind of problem related to their community, which is how to keep out the poor and keep taxes down; and they pursue their problem of keeping out the poor by the techniques which they learned from well-to-do communities before them--by the zoning technique, by the device of prescribing minimum lot sizes, by the device of requiring that certain non-structural features be added to a house which insure that it will cost not seven or eight thousand dollars but thirteen or fourteen thousand dollars. There is

a variety of techniques aimed at insuring that they maintain relatively homogeneous, middle-class neighborhoods, and keep out the flood of the great unwashed from the city.

Now as far as the poor are concerned, as long as houses sell for not less than 13 or 14 thousand dollars, as long as they are not permitted to build for seven or eight thousand dollars, they are confined by and large to the hand-me-down housing of other generations. Nonetheless, a rather considerable segment of the poor, operating under those rules, somehow manages to improve its lot. That is to say, their housing over the years, as nearly as one can tell from the housing data, has not retrogressed but has improved somewhat, dreadful though housing is for the poor. It has improved somewhat between, say, '50 and '56, which are two reference points for which you can examine such data. But their problem, of course, is to insure that the hand-me-down process--if they are going to be prevented from building 13-thousand-dollar houses--is accelerated; and their job is to break into suburban neighborhoods as fast as may be, and by their presence to expand the supply of housing which is offered to the poor. I suspect that a rather considerable slice of the poor living in the city--finding their jobs moving outward, unable to move out themselves, unless they can break into the middle-class phalanxes--see their housing problems in this way.

Now a rather significant part of the poor is beginning to find that the problem of transportation is not the problem of radial inbound traffic but the problem of radial outbound traffic. That is to say, although the flow of outbound traffic from congested central areas to the periphery is not yet one of the major streams of traffic in any urban area that I know of, every time one gets a scrap of statistics on the subject he finds that it is one of the most rapidly growing streams of traffic in the urban area. And this puts

a terribly difficult burden on the poor, because traveling outward from the center is not the converse of traveling inward from the periphery. All the schedules and all the physical facilities of mass transit are set up against it. And finally where you arrive at the station or point of descent, you are not coming into a highly congested area with many job opportunities. You still have one leg left to your journey, that of moving from the high-density stream of traffic to some dispersed point away from it. You typically solve this problem, because you have no choice, by the carpool or the maintenance of a car which you have then to garage in the city if you can, which adds another difficulty to your life.

The problem of the poor, as I say, is not radial inbound travel; it may be radial outbound or peripheral travel. Their problem is not the acquisition of housing near the central business district, in the oldest, most congested parts of the city; it is to get more housing in suburban areas, outward from the central business district. Their problem is not the decline of the city as a market area; most of them couldn't care less. Their problem is not the decline in the appearance of suburbs and urban sprawl; they'd like to own a piece of it themselves. What they want to do is to get out of the congested gray area, the congested central business district. Their problem, in short, is not the problem as we typically define it, but something very different.

Now I only have a little more to say by way of introduction. The critical point that I want to make to you is this. Those persons who have an economic interest in the maintenance of the central city as a market represent the rather significant slice of leadership of any urban area; they constitute the best newspapers and the best-intentioned newspapers, among other things. Those persons who look upon the central business district

as a place where they have to work constitute a critically important sector of the leadership of any urban area; they are leading businessmen, leading bankers, the most philanthropic and benign of the well-to-do families with the richest history in the particular urban area where they live. Those persons who look on the central business district as an intellectual gathering point again constitute a critical slice of the leadership component of the urban area; they are our intellectuals, our musicians, our principal architects. This is a pretty formidable group that represents the leadership of the community by and large. And what I suggest is that they have formulated the problems to meet their own needs--without any intention in the world of disregarding others' needs, but without regard to the fact that their own needs do not constitute the growing problems of the urban area, if you count problems by counting noses.

At this point, of course, the groups to whom I referred may well say: "Are you one of those who like mass television and American Legion neighborhood posts more than they like the Boston Symphony Orchestra? Do you not care for green belts and open spaces?" I don't know the answer to these questions. I only suggest that these values, widely shared on the part of urban leadership, are not shared by the great mass of urban dwellers; or if they are so shared, it is with great differences of emphasis and priority. Now, there are two things the leadership can do. It can say when confronted with this dilemma: "I confess. I have been the leader of a small group trying to promote its own special values and priorities." Or else, it can say: "Nothing doing. We elite want to present our values to other people because these are superior values."

I strongly suspect that the rather dreary record of failures on the part of persons

who want to "improve" the city is due in part to the way in which they have defined "improvement." If they wish to accomplish anything in this field, they will have to reshape their own objectives in terms that respond to the objectives of many more ordinary people. All of which means to me that if they think that the central business district must be retained as a gathering point for its cultural importance and for making communication easy, then their solution must also deal with the problem of the outbound commuter and the circumferential movement; for until they present packages which respond to the needs of a very large part of the body politic as that body sees its needs, they will simply not strike a responsive public chord.

If the urban leadership is looking for solutions, it will have to think not of solutions which provide more houses in and around the central business district--which is the usual pattern of housing "solutions" as they are proposed--but of approaches which at the same time meet the suburban needs of the poor. It may even have to think of solutions--this is one critical point--which respond to the desire of most middle-income groups to live in isolation from the poor. My own suspicion is that there will probably never be a substantial reuse of large areas of the old cities until or unless a form develops which satisfies the middle-income groups' desire for the exclusion of persons who are terribly different from them. What they seem to seek and may respond to are those homogeneous neighborhoods which would repel most of us in this room, but which correspond to their values. Since middle-income housing is really the only large land-using activity that we know of--industry certainly isn't and housing for the rich certainly isn't--I resign myself to the fact that there are two real alternatives available for land in the old congested cities: either to let these areas

retrogress as they have, which is in itself a kind of solution; or else to use them for homogeneous, middle-income housing.

Now, this may seem a program which commands so little favor on the part of those who are professionals in the business, that it isn't worth struggling for. Well, it may be. I simply suggest that we face up to the dilemma squarely and recognize that baying for the moon will do no good. To ask for the reuse of large portions of the old cities and then to suggest that this reuse be for the very wealthy or for industrial purposes, or for much greater open space--these are all alternatives which, as I see it, are not in the race.

Now to a final point. In implementing any of these programs for the alteration of an area, whether in the field of transportation or housing or open space, I despair of the notion that metropolitan government in one form or another is a solution. In this, I think, I have much more company than in many of the prescriptions I've laid down this afternoon. This doesn't mean that I despair of any effective government intervention in urban problems. Not at all. But I have a suspicion that the form which the intervention will take is much more likely to follow some of the leads which are already becoming apparent--intervention by the state in subtle ways, through a shift in the burden of taxation from local to state government, with the state government collecting more of the taxes and providing more subventions; intervention by the federal government, as it makes more planning grants, perhaps makes more subsidies to transportation, perhaps even--once it is committed to supporting mass transportation--gets into the business of trying to coordinate highway and mass transportation in the areas in which it is making subventions; intervention by special authorities in special cases,

but authorities with larger, more extensive functions than is now the case. I see all these as possibilities of government intervention, but I don't see metropolitan government as a serious runner in most places in the United States. And I suspect that some of these measures, such as provision of mass transit on a basis which takes into account circumferential and diffused hauling along with radial hauling, though they seem close to impossible today, may develop out of changed institutional set-ups, such as enlarged and altered port authorities and similar devices.

Mr. Wilson: I was much attracted and much persuaded by the Stafford Little Lectures. So persuaded that my fear is that your statement is far from being too outrageous. It's not outrageous enough. Because the first 50 pages of the document persuaded me that you had achieved two notable objectives. First of all, in cutting the so-called urban crisis down to size, and pointing out how in historical perspective the city may be getting better instead of worse by the standards of most of the people who live in it. And secondly, by suggesting that solutions to whatever remnants of the crisis are to be found should be politically feasible ones which can command the support of those people to whom politicians are responsible. And then I came upon the suggestion that we ought to do two things in the housing field. First of all, perhaps we ought to subsidize the poor to enable them to get more housing, and secondly we ought to have some kind of planning agency or special district take away from the suburbs the power to determine who shall move into their community. In effect, we should ask the people in these suburbs to resign from the middle class. Given what you'd said before, I was a little perplexed as to whether this prescription was consistent with the two objectives that you earlier achieved. That is, how big really is the problem, and secondly, is this

a politically feasible solution?

Mr. Vernon: Well, the role of the middle-income groups over the generations will be the role of flight. The question is one of speed. The process by which a given area finally permits the poor to come in is quite dynamic and varied. Someone breaks up an estate when nobody is looking and an exclusive neighborhood like Scarsdale wakes up with a start to discover that a hundred cheap new homes are being built in its midst. Someone owns an old mansion close to the central business district or a suburban town and finds a code loophole or gets a variance; pretty soon he has six families in the structure, living infinitely more comfortably than they did in Harlem. Then the critical question arises: how fast does the presence of this avant garde speed change and how strongly is the change resisted? In a situation in which the change is speedy, more housing is being made available to the poor, and the middle-income groups move on. In a situation in which the poor are locked out, the housing supply of the poor is constricted. I have some very modest proposals here. I simply suggest that there may be one means or another for speeding the outmovement of the middle class and thereby adding to the supply of housing available to the poor. I don't flatter myself that this is to be done in one fell swoop, that large groups of communities will give up the ghost; but there are points at the margin at which you can speed the process. The choices the communities may take in locking out the poor can, I suspect, be circumscribed here and there in connection with federal grants in aid or state grants in aid. No revolutions will take place in this regard but small advances will be made. They needn't be terribly large, I suspect, to add rather significantly at the margins of the supply of housing to the poor. Perhaps the lectures overstate my own expectations in this regard.

Mr. Wilson: I understand the modesty of your expectations. I am really concerned with the rationale for the proposal. Why accelerate the flight of the middle class? The alternative way of making housing available is to wait for the poor to cease being poor, and acquire housing on the same basis as the people before them.

Mr. Vernon: Well, these are not alternatives; these are supplementary.

Mr. Wilson: This is complicated by the color factor, which is not eradicated by a rising income, unfortunately, although in some ways it may be, but by what rationale would you justify that government or some other agency should intervene to accelerate the process by which the middle class is driven out of their homes?

Mr. Vernon: In the field of equity there is no rationale. In the field of equity there are just subjective values. Now, I say simply that the poor probably are experiencing larger difficulties in transportation to their jobs as their jobs move out, and I assert in a subjective manner that I think it would be a nice thing for society to provide them with homes near their jobs. I don't ask you to share that view. If on the other hand you happen to share the view, then I suggest that one way to do it is the way that I've suggested in the paper.

Mr. Haar: Can I talk about political acceptability for a minute, Ray? Isn't the surprising thing not that the programs are not shaped to the aspirations of the large groups, but isn't the surprising thing how wide a political acceptance they in fact have received?

Mr. Vernon: Which program?

Mr. Haar: Urban renewal, for example.

Mr. Vernon: Well, I suggest that urban renewal, measured in any of the terms that are used to justify urban renewal, is an insignificant program. Try the helicopter approach. It

gives you an entirely different view of urban renewal--but entirely different. In New York I spent the equivalent of 10 full days just sitting over the city and the eye-impression you come away with is that you simply can't find the urban renewal projects in the city mass. And when you do find them, with a few isolated exceptions, they're terribly close to the central business district. Why this location? Not necessarily because the need counted by noses is there, but because the whole leadership of the urban renewal program sees the problem the same way that a New Yorker sees the United States. Nine-tenths of it is east of the Mississippi, and from their point of view nine-tenths of the problem lies fairly close around the central business district.

Mr. Haar: But this is my point--that the urban renewal, which has its worst impact on the large majority of the minority groups in this kind of thing, does get the political acceptance. The money that is spent from the federal government has gone there, or into the open-space program, which I think is just a corollary--in other words it is again a proposal for the wealthier group.

Mr. Vernon: Because nobody has formed any alternative proposals.

Mr. Rodwin: It's not an answer, Ray, to say that an alternative proposal wasn't presented. As I understand it you're saying that proposals of this sort are not likely to win support because there are groups that really don't feel these problems. You still have a problem of explaining how it managed to win the support that it has won today.

Mr. Vernon: Well, very simple. You have an elite group supporting these proposals and they can manage to get marginal sums for their proposals. But they're only marginal sums. The amount of area in New York subjected to urban renewal programs the last time I looked at it was less than three square miles. It may be up to three by now. The area

of New York City is about 250 square miles and most of it is lousy, viewed in terms of both aesthetics and professional housing standards.

Mr. Abrams: Do you think the city is dead regardless of what public policy may be introduced?

Mr. Vernon: No. It may be revived by a public policy which, I think you would find, didn't fit your subjective set of values--values which I may say I tend to share. If the middle-income groups could be assured that they were being placed in middle-income ghettos, they might well respond to a very extensive increase in middle-income housing in the old cities. There would be some disadvantages and the market would be limited by two things. A limited number of people want this choice; and those who elected it would insist upon much lower densities than you now have. But those two things aside, I can see some significant reuse of the land if you can figure out a way of creating the ghettos. I assume that with my caveat you won't buy the package.

Mr. Banfield: It seems to me that even if one is willing to buy the middle-class ghettos, there's still a political bind there. As Ray has pointed out, the poor have had the advantage of being decentralized into housing vacated by the departing middle class in the central city. Now along come the Kennedy Administration and Mr. Weaver [Robert C. Weaver, administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency], who in the interests of the poor are going to push them back out of the middle-class neighborhoods into the slums that they have been trying to escape--and who are going to do this by creating higher densities of land use in order to bring the middle class back into the central city, and by subsidizing mass transit to bring the middle class back in. It seems to me that the more of the middle class you bring back into these areas, the tougher you make it for the poor. The people who might have the political muscle to do the things necessary to bring

the middle class back in will find themselves slapped down cold by the poor, when the pressure on the poor becomes conspicuous enough to provoke the inevitable reaction.

Mr. Vernon: Unless they are released to the suburbs, in pursuit of their jobs.

Mr. Banfield: But this is poison too, as Jim Wilson said.

Mr. Abrams: Can't you see the suburbs becoming intolerable on the basis of stretching out further and further?

Mr. Vernon: No, because if you analyze the job market as I've tried to do, they're not "stretching." The jobs are moving with the people. Many of the middle-income group look on their suburban jobs as easier and not harder in terms of commuting. . .

Mr. Abrams: Yeah, the only thing is that as you build these houses in the suburbs, it may get much easier for a suburbanite to travel into Grand Central, let's say, but it would be a hell of a thing for him to travel from, let's say, White Plains to somewhere in the other direction.

Mr. Vernon: He doesn't have to, Charlie, for a very simple reason. He's not offering his services to a unique job market and he's not insisting on a unique neighborhood. In other words, as you move outward, if his job is in a particular place that can't be moved, he'll find a neighborhood close to it. If his home is in a particular place and can't be moved, he may very well find a job close to it, if that's the problem. It's entirely different from the problem of the elite or the problem of the poor.

Mr. Abrams: There's only one point where I'll agree with you and that is that if this pattern goes on long enough, and if they begin to build some of these multiple dwellings and set up permanent associations and make the suburb another city, in which you have the advantages of being in a large city, and if the federal government continues to subsidize

that, it may create a validity which I don't think is encompassed in your thesis. I think public policy could sway the situation toward the cities just as well. It will be a hard job, but I think it can be done.

Mr. Vernon: What is the value which leads you to want to find the solution which brings you back to the city? This is what's important to me.

Mr. Abrams: Only because I think of the central city as something which must exist if the suburbs themselves are to be valid. In other words, I think that without them the suburbs, unless they develop into their own cities, cannot exist.

Mr. Banfield: To speak of the suburbs as being "valid" or "not valid" doesn't mean anything. To say the suburb doesn't exist is simply to say that people are going to live somewhere else. Where else are they going to live? In the suburbs.

Mr. Abrams: Now, what I'm saying is that if they live in the suburbs, the validity of the suburbs exists only if the city exists.

Mr. Sullivan: This is a restatement of this idea that you can't have a healthy Newton with a declining Boston.

Mr. Vernon: Yes, but what does that mean? It's been said many times, but I don't understand it. I understand that the elite will have a hell of a time. I understand perfectly well what the costs are of the spread of the city to groups with whom I identify myself, of whom I'm probably a part--namely groups whose activity requires them to be down in the central business district. I understand also the problems of the poor who find their jobs moving outwards and don't find their homes moving outward at the same rate. But to go from that level to a much different level of abstraction--to wit,"the suburbs are not viable without the central business district"--I don't know what that means. I know what

it means for five or 10 percent of the people who will miss some very critical values in their own lives; but I don't know what it means for what may be as much as 90 per cent of the people who, in the normal course, don't enter the central business district for God knows how long in the course of a year.

Miss Derthick: I have a feeling that in your paper you're arguing that the lower-class group and middle-class group are not responding to the appeals of the elite because they are really very well satisfied with the current situation, their interests are really very well served, and I wonder if it may not be possible that they don't respond in part because they're normally apathetic and inarticulate. This would be true particularly of the lowest income group. You've just about persuaded me in the discussions here that the middle-income group really is very well off now, but wouldn't it be true of the lower-class group that they have real grievances--that they don't necessarily feel that they're progressing--but that they just have nothing to respond to and nobody to articulate this?

Mr. Vernon: Yes, I would say this is probably true. And this is why I suggest that if you arm the poor with a weapon to express their discontent such as a rent subsidy, they might promptly go out into the suburbs and away from the place where they live to try to bid for housing there.

Miss Derthick: I wonder with Mr. Wilson about the political feasibility. This has been suggested in Washington and maybe elsewhere, at least it has been suggested down there that you issue low-income certificates to low-income groups to enable them to get housing in the suburbs. It seems to me just an absurd idea at least in Washington and I presume elsewhere.

Mr. Vernon: You mean in political terms?

Miss Derthick: Yes. It would require congressional approval. It means simply paying the Negroes to move to the suburbs. How could any politician do this?

Mr. Vernon: It's very tough. There are alternative positions, however, one can take. The zoning approach can be changed. Suburban zoning today is used largely to keep the poor out. It has other purposes, too--aesthetic purposes and traffic purposes. But the critical issue in the town is how to keep the tax base right and how to keep the poor out. Aesthetics then come third.

Well, so far, federal policy has abetted this approach. It has insisted that lots shall be of a certain size and that certain structural features shall be built into a house which are not necessary for decency and health but which add to the cost of the house. The result is that the poor must pay something on the order of 12 to 16 thousand dollars for the minimum house. We know perfectly well that quite good houses can be built for seven or eight thousand when compared with a tenement slum--hygienic, decent, good shelter. It's done at seashores and mountain resorts. You see perfectly good cinder-block houses built at seashores for seven or eight thousand dollars with no zoning or other restraints. [Interjection: "No heating."] Well, there are cases in which there is heating. In Long Island, you can do it for seven or eight--maybe eight or nine to cover your heating plant. But, I have the strongest suspicion, and this is a question for experts, that you could slice off three or four thousand dollars from the cost of the house. And since the price elasticity of demand for houses is very high at those levels, you would be introducing into the new housing market people who are not now there. Now this is a change that lies partly in the hands of the federal government, without the subsidy question entering in. It's a question of the FHA rewriting standards

for mortgageability and so on.

Mr. Meyerson: Ray, I think you have a brilliant analysis of how metropolitan areas have responded to past political and market pressures. But then your faith in the market and political mechanisms gets shaken at the end of your lectures when you begin thinking of the future. The vitality we've exhibited in the past resulted in the equilibrium you essentially praise and results in all kinds of satisfactions for most of the people who now live in urban areas. This same vitality still persists. I spent the last two days in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and was astonished to see the kinds of adaptations that have been taking place within that small metropolitan area. Let me illustrate. Chattanooga has a 403-acre renewal site. In that city it is equal to the downtown in size. It's two-thirds of a square mile. There was no strong political opposition to its clearance. Everyone's ends were satisfied. There weren't many people who were left living in it because this had been partly a Negro area and as the middle-class had moved out of Chattanooga the Negroes had moved into middle-class housing. The investors saw an opportunity for profitable investment in having a gigantic stretch of territory opened up. Yet nobody has figured out what that profitable investment might be, not because there's a lack of federal or other public policies, but because the entrepreneurial groups haven't been sensitive enough to the changes that are taking place. For example, the new highway to Atlanta will make Atlanta an hour and a half away from Chattanooga, about the same distance travelled by the executive who comes in from Darien or New Canaan to Manhattan. On this basis, this 403 acres in the center of Chattanooga could easily be an industrial district, for part of the gigantic new industrial complex that Atlanta represents. The whole scale of time and other dimensions is changing as are the market and political

responses to this. Therefore, in many cities the entrepreneurial groups are beginning to see possibilities that they had not seen before. In the Chattanooga area, for example, one use of land is for the Confederama, a model of the battle sites of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and Chickamauga. In this period of interest in the Civil War, the attraction of duplicating some of the scenes of the War is very real. If we don't make the biased value judgment of the intellectual that such an activity is terrible, we may very well find that in the grey areas we have many opportunities for recreational and other uses that we do not now foresee. Similarly, apart from the use of rent certificates or any other device, you rightly point out that the lower-income families are moving to the suburbs, that Negroes are moving to the suburbs. Both low-income Negroes and high-income ones and low-income whites will begin moving more and more to the suburbs, not because any special public agencies or programs are established, but because the housing stock in the suburbs is just getting older, and as it gets older, there are more and more vacancies. So that the kinds of adaptations which you have described in the past are continuing now. And I think they're continuing in ways that don't make the prospects for the grey areas gloomy, at least to my mind. Nor do they even necessarily mean that the downtown will retain the strength it has. I think you somewhat wanted to be an optimist there when you said you cannot have more than one private club, but of course you can, and the New York area does. There is a Harvard Club of Long Island, a Harvard Club of Westchester, and so on, and I think you will find this increasingly to be the case in the larger urban areas. For example, in the center of Chattanooga, a city that is surrounded by major regional shopping centers, I found only one retail activity downtown that was not duplicated in the regional centers, and this was a Bible

bookshop. But other than that I found nothing in downtown Chattanooga that did not also exist in the outlying centers. And on the way back from Chattanooga my hosts introduced me to several people who were to be on the plane with me going to New York, and I wondered why they were going to New York. One couple were going for their fall shopping. Another man was going up to the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center for his checkup. The urban horizons of these people have ceased to be anything that we could reasonably call a metropolitan area, but have become a gigantic portion of the United States in which Atlanta and Chattanooga are almost indistinguishable and New York offers in a sense a good part of the downtown specialized goods and services that might at an earlier period in history have been Chattanooga's. Now in view of this very subtle shift that has taken place, I think some of your proposals ought to be possibly even more modest than they are--for example, the thought that governmental jurisdictions for transportation are needed to cover larger areas. Maybe the area almost necessarily is a national one. When I begin to see the real linkages of Chattanooga to other parts of the country, I can't help but think that setting up a Chattanooga area transportation agency would probably be inhibiting to the normal market forces that would be at work there. If you want to have the kind of market dominance that generally runs through your argument, I think you almost have to make the forms of political intervention subservient to them.

Mr. Vernon: Well, we do have a point of difference in our projections. I'm grateful for your flushing it out. The reason that I have assumed under-use, declining population and jobs, and the absence of new land use in these grey areas was this. I assume these 403 acres of Chattanooga will be made available to persons desiring to use these areas

at a price which would capitalize in one way or another at something in excess of $50,000 an acre. I assume this without knowing the facts, and it may well be higher. Then I set about asking myself what land in metropolitan areas of the United States--defining those metropolitan areas quite broadly to include fairly large chunks of land--what use will attract persons prepared to pay $50,000 an acre or more. (In the New York area the figure can run much higher, say half a million dollars an acre.) In looking at all the possible extensive land-using activities in the United States, industry certainly doesn't qualify on this basis. If it can get land for $20,000 an acre within, say, 10 or 15 miles of the city center, as against getting it three miles from the city center, the difference between, say, $20,000 an acre and $50,000 will be sufficient to put the decision outside. I went through all the significant land-using activities that I could think of--I confess I didn't think of confederama--and couldn't find a use other than middle-income use, sufficiently subsidized so that the land costs were brought down very far below the $50,000 figure you're talking about. For this reason my projection was one which assumed that what you had here--and what you frequently have in the free market process--was a temporal friction, which might ultimately be overcome if land became a scarce resource, but which was so strong and so powerful that for the kind of time span that I regard as relevant--say on the order of 25-30 years for planning purposes--I didn't anticipate a large re-use of the land. So I did come out, as I say, with rather a different projection than the one implicit in your statement.

Mr. Meyerson: It's just a small point of fact. I think on the cost and availability of outlying land, there certainly seems a lot of evidence the other way, because certainly in the years since the Second World War the cost of land for residential purposes has gone up

and gone up very, very sharply.

Mr. Vernon: Well, let's be careful how we analyze it, because it has to be analyzed in a very tricky and odd way. What you have to ask yourself is not what happened to a given piece of land in terms of value over time, but what has happened to the cost of land in, say, the upper Bronx in 1925 as compared with, say, Teaneck in 1961. Is there evidence of an increase in the cost of land in these terms?

Mr. Meyerson: Yes. In the 15 years since the Second World War the proportion of land cost in total cost of housing in the United States has gone up from a shade over one-tenth to almost two-tenths.

Mr. Vernon: But that's not an adequate test.

Mr. Meyerson: Well, let me go on a bit. The main reason that it has gone up is because at the end of the war we had a gigantic backlog of past market failures to lean upon, and we have just about used up that backlog of market failure. The so-called premature subdividers of the late 1920's and early 1930's took over into the urban land market gigantic areas. In the Detroit area it probably amounted to several times the actual developed area. In Chicago it was probably equal to the developed area. This was in a period when public agencies typically serviced these so called premature subdivisions--put in utilities and so on. So that what we have been doing is living with a series of speculative errors in a gigantic housing and industrial and commercial boom of the past 15 years. But now we're at a point where we just don't have these same kinds of opportunities. One of the home builder's biggest complaints today is where can he get land. Where can he get land at price levels that at all correspond with the market he is trying to serve?

Mr. Vernon: Well, this is an area which very well merits a lot of research. The facts put on the table here have to be investigated many steps further, for a number of reasons. Reason number one is that the sort of mix requested by the home owner has no doubt changed. That is to say, he wants more land per unit of house; so that the fact that two-tenths of the value of the house is now land compared to one-tenth formerly would have to be adjusted for a change in the nature of demand, if one could possibly do it. Point number two, what you have to ask yourself is this: Given the spread of the urban area, and given the fact that the first impact of the spread is that land used for farming purposes tends to be withdrawn from such purposes, is the farmer's withdrawal releasing land rapidly enough to offset the increasing demands of the people for another kind of mix of land cum house? I don't know what the answer to this is. I had assumed on the basis of what scanty scraps of evidence we had in the New York Metropolitan area that in some abstract sense the balance was not leading to a land shortage. If this proves not to be the case, and if your points start to gain in validity, it may begin to be appropriate to regard land as a scarce resource, and there may be a market force recapturing the land in rundown areas. I had always assumed that this was a stage that would occur in, say, the year 2022, not in 1972. But I could be wrong about that.

Mr. Meyerson: Let me say that my point about land was not that there is going to be this gigantic shortage on the outskirts of metropolitan areas and therefore tremendous attraction within the older parts of cities. I think that both the older parts of cities and the outskirts of metropolitan areas will have relatively high land costs even with public subsidies through renewal. They will both have relatively high land costs compared to the real opportunities for open land that are very much further out, that are beyond anything that we today regard

as the metropolitan area. This summer I was fascinated to see how virtually every small town in southern New Hampshire now has an electronics plant or a small precision industry. And I began talking with some of the managers and they said, "Oh, we can't afford these land prices on Route 128," or, "We can't afford to be in technology square, back of MIT. We really need low land costs." And they go to a place like Peterborough or Keene, and draw on a labor force within a 50-mile radius which with almost universal car ownership is completely feasible. So I think we're getting a pattern of economic activity today that just doesn't at all resemble what concepts of a metropolitan area imply.

Mr. Vernon: There is only one element missing from your argument and, if you can complete it, it seems to me to be a very important argument--is there sufficient demand from industries for high-cost land to constitute a significant reuse of the areas in the old cities where populations and jobs are rapidly declining? At this point, what you can suggest is that any price that political requirements dictate may prevail. But how in fact have the politics balanced out? What have been the prices at which land authorities have found it desirable or necessary under political pressures to turn over the land?

Mr. Meyerson: Well, this ties in with the question as to the political acceptability of urban renewal. You point out the satisfactions of the present urban resident. All my own inclinations are to agree with you. Yet, of course, these satisfactions are unmeasured. And we have no realistic way of creating such a measure. I would like to suggest, however that although the quality of urban living has gone up and housing quality has gone up, it's my own impression that aspirations have gone up even more, particularly on the part of the Negro and many low-income groups whose educational level has changed. Now if aspirations have gone up higher than actual improvement in urban goods and services, your argu-

ment falters a good deal. Now let us assume for the moment that I'm right in saying that aspirations have gone up, but these aspirations have not been easily channeled into specific action. Let us also assume that urban renewal has a peculiar mystique--some people somehow have a vision of a better city through urban renewal, more attractive, more convenient, and so on. Now, as long as that mystique exists you find in city after city political acceptance of urban renewal. But this is before urban renewal actually gets achieved. The results of urban renewal are still to be assessed. As you say, fly in a helicopter and you see little urban renewal. Now, since this is so, the political acceptance of course is a symbolic rather than a real one, because as soon as people begin facing the implications of urban renewal, I think that the support will wither and turn in considerable measure to hostility unless the area to be cleared has through market forces become meaningless to anybody. I would say in that kind of situation, the wise course of action for any city is to just put the area on the market in the simplest possible terms and invite developers to use their ingenuity.

Mr. Vernon: Market it at what price? If a bid of something on the order of $20,000 is appropriate and if the time span between your bid and your acceptance is comparable to that for a private purchase, and if you can have plots assembled of the size comparable to the size you have on the outskirts, then you hit an indifference situation as far as a certain amount of industry is concerned, provided you've got good road transportation to the site, which we presume you can achieve by federal subsidy, the highway. I would acknowledge all that fairly readily. I have a suspicion, however--this is just a guess--that when you net out all the political forces operating on the price and operating on the procedure, you will have: (a) a much higher price than $20,000, (b) a much longer procedure than just a

few months, and (c) much smaller parcels than you're talking about. That's why I do not project the reuse very readily.

Mr. Meyerson: So that this then hinges on one key thing, the organizational behavior of a bureaucracy that will not behave in such a way as to convert grey areas into easily usable purchases.

Mr. Vernon: Precisely.

Mr. Meyerson: Ray, we've kept you going for two hours. Do you want to give any concluding comments?

Mr. Vernon: Thank you very much.

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